The 72nd annual South Central Modern Language Association Conference is in just a few months! We’re expecting 550 members will attend the conference in Nashville, Tennessee this fall. We’re looking forward to another lively conference this year as many of our regular sessions have again split into two or three panels. As always, we received special session proposals on a diverse range of topics.

We’re anticipating a busy conference schedule. Members in all of our constituent fields of study will have many options and sometimes, despite all of our efforts to avoid scheduling panels on similar subjects against each other, may face hard choices. We will send an email to our members in July when the conference program is finalized and ready for viewing on our website.

The conference will take place at the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt in Nashville, Tennessee October 31—November 3 (Saturday—Tuesday). The Marriott is located on West End Avenue, directly across from Centennial Park and the famed Parthenon. Music Row and the Second Avenue Entertainment District are also nearby. Rooms may be reserved at $139/night for a single/double by calling 615-321-1300 or online here. Be sure to say that you want the South Central Modern Language rate when making your reservations. We fully expect to sell out our room block at this hotel, so participants are urged to make their reservations as soon as possible. All conference participants must reserve their rooms with the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt by September 30, 2015 in order to receive the conference rate.

To learn about Nashville’s dining, museums, music scene, and special events visit: www.visitmusiccity.com

South Central Newsletter

Sound and Story: The Rhythms of Language

This year our conference theme is “Sound and Story: The Rhythms of Language.” The rhythms of the languages we speak shape literary texts; rhyme, meter, assonance, and other sound patterns underpin our poetry, and musicality and sound figure as significant elements in many narratives. Tolstoy’s characters visit the opera; a musical passage haunts Proust’s narrator across time and space; Chaucer’s rhyme and rhythm carried English into a new poetic space, paving the way for Shakespeare; Faulkner, like so many others, captures regional dialects in informal prose. Sound matters as much for scholars of literature as it does for linguists and language pedagogues. Just as linguists transcribe and analyze the sounds of our languages and language pedagogues help learners to mirror native speaker pronunciation and intonation, writers work to capture regional inflections. Similarly, filmmakers try to create compelling soundscapes, extra-diegetic music shaping spectator expectations and emotional responses. Song lyrics more and more attract attention as a distinctive literary form, worthy of serious scholarly analysis. The 2015 convention in Nashville, Tennessee invites papers that focus on issues connected to music, musicality and sound from the perspective of all of our constituent fields, including linguistics, language pedagogy, film-studies, gender studies, and cultural studies.
Conference Highlights

We are excited to announce our Keynote Speaker will be Dr. Edward H. Friedman, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Spanish, Professor of Comparative Literature, and director of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University. He will be presenting his talk entitled “The Humane, the Mundane, and the Future of the World.” A full biography of Dr. Friedman can be found later in the newsletter.

The Poet’s Corner, features a strong slate of writers again this year. Larry Thomas, Benjamin Myers and Kate Daniels will all present their recent work. Biographies for each of these writers appear later in the newsletter.

As always, in Nashville, we will hold two hors d'œuvres receptions with cash bars. The President's Reception on Sunday from 7:30pm to 9pm and the SCMLA Social on Monday from 7:30pm to 9:00pm.

Job Seekers Workshop

We will offer a job seekers workshop at the Nashville conference. The workshop will be held the evening of Saturday October 31st. Please check the conference schedule when it is posted to our website in July for the time of the workshop.

Conference Logistics

All conference participants must register online by August 31 in order to be included in the program. Registration is now open and can be found by visiting our website under the Conference tab. Additionally, the URL is provided here: REGISTER ONLINE

Rooms at the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt may be reserved at $139/night (plus tax) for a single/double by calling 615-321-1300 or online. Please state you want the “South Central Modern Language Association rate” when making your reservations. All conference participants must reserve their rooms with the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt by September 30, 2015 in order to receive the conference rate.

Questions?

If you have questions about the registration process or conference logistics, please contact Ashley Tullius at: 405-325-6011 or scmla@ou.edu. If you have suggestions or feedback about the association or the conference, please contact Emily Johnson at emilyjohnson@ou.edu. We look forward to seeing you in Nashville!

Additional Convention Opportunities

Breakfasts

The South Central English Association (SCCEA) and the Women’s Caucus will hold breakfasts Monday and Tuesday mornings respectively. Members will no longer register for these events through the online registration process. Members will receive more information via email at a later date on how to register for these events.

Mock Job Interviews

We will offer mock interviews at various times during the conference. More information about how to register for mock interviews will be distributed in the early fall. No special advance registration is required for the workshop for job seekers.

SCMLA Member Benefits

Your SCMLA membership provides you with a range of wonderful benefits. Currently these benefits include presenting at our annual convention, networking receptions, workshops for job seekers, mock interviews, the opportunity to meet with the editors of journals and magazines and the representatives of academic publishers, the ability to advertise your book publications, eligibility to submit work to the South Central Review, a free digital subscription to the magazine World Literature Today, and the chance to both run in and vote in Executive Committee elections.

Tax-deductible Friends of the SCMLA donation-level memberships offer additional benefits, such as a special invitation to join our executive officers for a small get together on the first night of the conference.

SCMLA members may compete for a number of scholarly prizes, including the annual SCMLA Research Grant in the amount of $1500, the Benson Latin American Collection Grant ($1500), and Conference Travel Grants (up to $500 for faculty; $200 for graduate students).

NEW AWARDS FOR SCMLA MEMBERS

SCMLA will offer new awards for Career Achievement in Research ($750) and Service to the Profession ($750) for the first time. Nominations for these NEW awards should be sent to scmla@ou.edu by March 31, 2016 and should include: a cover letter detailing the nominee’s achievements, a current CV for the nominee, and up to three letters of support. Self-nominations for these awards are not allowed. These awards will be presented at the Business meeting at the 2016 Dallas convention.
Executive Committee 2015

Jeanne Gillespie, **President**  
University of Southern Mississippi  
jeanne.gillespie@usm.edu

Melissa Bailar, **Past President**  
Rice University  
melba@rice.edu

Julie Chappell, **Vice-president**  
Tarleton State University  
chappell@tarleton.edu

Emily D. Johnson, **Executive Director**  
University of Oklahoma  
emilydjohnson@ou.edu

Richard J. Golsan, **Editor** (2013-2017)  
*South Central Review*  
Texas A&M University - College Station  
rjgolsan@aol.com

Lynn Alexander, **English** (2015-2017)  
University of Tennessee-Martin  
lalexand@utm.edu

Stuart McClintock, **French** (2014-2016)  
Midwestern State University  
stuart.mcclintock@mwsu.edu

Jacob Ivan Eidt, **German** (2013-2015)  
University of Dallas  
jieidt@udallas.edu

Trinity University-San Antonio  
mward@trinity.edu

Jeffrey Oxford, **Spanish** (2015-2017)  
Midwestern State University  
jeffrey.oxford@mwsu.edu

Sylvia Morin, **At-Large** (2014-2016)  
University of Tennessee-Martin  
sylvievomin@yahoo.com

Genaro Pérez, **At-Large** (2013-2015)  
Texas Tech University  
genaro.perez@ttu.edu

Daniel Traber, **American Literature** (2014-2016)  
Texas A&M University-Galveston  
traberd@tamug.edu

Executive Committee Elections 2015

You can vote in the 2015 Executive Committee Elections as part of the conference registration process. Candidate statements can be found on our website [here](#).

Executive Committee 2015 Nominations:  
*(Service begins January 1, 2016)*

**Vice President**  
Paul Larson  
Baylor University

**German Language Representative**  
Joe Sullivan  
University of Oklahoma

**At-Large Representative**  
Mallory Young  
Tarleton State University

**Consulting Editors for South Central Review to Approve:**  
British Literature—Marian Eide, Texas A&M U  
German—Stefanie Harris, Texas A&M U

2016 Election Information

Members are invited to submit nominations and self-nominations for the 2016 election of **French Language Representative and At-Large Representative**. Candidates for these positions should be ready to serve three-year terms. The Executive Committee meets annually at the fall convention and also confers over email as necessary. Executive Committee members typically serve on two or three sub-committees each year. Expenses for the fall meeting must be paid by the member or the member’s institution. Nominations/self-nominations should be accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae (max. 4 pages). Send by October 1, 2015 to scmla@ou.edu.
Edward H. Friedman is Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Spanish, Professor of Comparative Literature, and director of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University. He is editor of the Bulletin of the Comediantes and a former president of the Cervantes Society of America. He has held grants from Fulbright-Hays, the National Humanities Center, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. His primary field of research is early modern Spanish literature, with emphasis on the picaresque, Cervantes, and the Comedia. His research also covers contemporary narrative and drama. Publications include Cervantes in the Middle: Realism and Reality in the Spanish Novel and the plays Into the Mist, Crossing the Line: A Quixotic Adventure in Two Acts, and The Labyrinth of Love. He recently ventured into the field of poetry with Quixotic Haiku: Poems and Notes.

Benjamin Myers is the 2015-2016 Poet Laureate of the State of Oklahoma and the author of two books of poetry: Lapse Americana (New York Quarterly Books, 2013) and Elegy for Trains (Village Books Press, 2010). His poems may be read in The Yale Review, The New York Quarterly, 32 Poems, Poetry Northwest, Nimrod, Redivider, and other journals, as well as on the Verse Daily website. He has been honored with an Oklahoma Book Award from the Oklahoma Center for the Book and with a Tennessee Williams Scholarship from the Sewanee Writers’ Conference. Myers teaches poetry writing and literature at Oklahoma Baptist University, where he is the Crouch-Mathis Associate Professor of Literature.

Poets' Corner Poets

Larry Thomas, a member of the Texas Institute of Letters, served as the 2008 Texas Poet Laureate. He has published several award-winning collections of poetry, and his poetry has appeared in numerous national journals including the Southwest Review, Poet Lore, Chattahoochee Review, Arkansas Review, Texas Review, Journal of the American Medical Association, Review Americana, Green Hills Literary Lantern, and Southwestern American Literature. As If Light Actually Matters: New & Selected Poems is forthcoming from Texas Review Press (Texas A&M University Press Consortium) in 2015. Among his many honors and awards are two Texas Review Poetry Prizes, the national Western Heritage Award (Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), Violet Crown Book Award (Writers’ League of Texas), nomination for the 2007 Poets’ Prize (Nicholas Roerich Museum), and five Pushcart Prize nominations. For 2015, he has been awarded his second Western Heritage Award for his poetry collection, The Goatherd.

Kate Daniels poems appear in more than sixty anthologies, including Poetry Daily: 366 Poems from the World’s Most Popular Poetry Website (2003); The Extraordinary Tide: New Poetry by American Women (Columbia University Press, 2001); The Made Thing: Contemporary Southern Poetry (Arkansas: 1999); and Longman Anthology of Women’s Literature (2000). Poems have been individually published in numerous journals and magazines, and have been the recipient of awards including the Best American Poetry 2008 and 2010; the Crazyhorse Prize for Poetry; a Pushcart Prize, the Louisiana Literature Poetry Prize, the James Dickey Prize from Five Points: A Journal of Literature and Art; and the 2011 Hanes Award for Poetry by the Fellowship of Southern Writers. She was recently elected to membership in the Fellowship and will be inducted in the spring of 2015. Her first book of poetry, The White Wave (Pittsburgh, 1984), won the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize. Her second volume, The Niobe Poems (Pittsburgh, 1988), received honorable mention for the Paterson Poetry Prize. Four Testimonies, her third volume, was one of Dave Smith’s selections for his Southern Messenger Series, published by LSU Press (1998). A fourth volume, A Walk in Victoria’s Secret, was published in 2011 in the same series. She edited the first selected poems edition of Muriel Rukeyser, Out of Silence, in 1993 (TriQuarterly Press); co-edited an early volume on Robert Bly, Of Solitude and Silence (Beacon Press, 1983); and was co-founder and co-editor of Poetry East literary magazine from 1980-89. Kate was a Bunting Fellow at Harvard University 1984-85 and a Guggenheim Fellow in Poetry 2013-14.
2015 Paper Prizes

AWARDS EXCLUSIVE TO SCMLA FALL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Members with appropriate papers scheduled for the Nashville 2015 conference are encouraged to compete for our conference paper and creative writing prizes. For rules please see our website.

Bill L. and Gerre D. Andrist Prize in Hispanic Gender Studies—$250

Vuong Short Story Prize—$500

SCMLA Prize for the Best Paper in Historical, Literary, and/or Cultural Studies—$250

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: AUGUST 31, 2014

Eligibility Requirements: Applicants for all awards must be current SCMLA members and must have been members for the previous two years. Graduate Student Grant applicants must have been members for one year. SCMLA Executive Committee members are ineligible. Deadlines are all in 2015. For more information, see our website.

2016 Prizes & Grants

SCMLA FELLOWSHIP AT THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-AUSTIN FOR THE 2016-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR-$3000 Information on eligibility, how to apply and deadline here.

BENSON LATIN AMERICAN COLLECTION-SCMLA FACULTY RESEARCH GRANT-$1500
APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 28, 2016

SCMLA RESEARCH GRANTS
$1500 for Faculty (Open to all eligible members who have completed the PhD)
$1500 for Temporary Faculty and Independent Scholars (Only eligible members who have completed the terminal degree for their area and do not hold regular faculty positions may apply)
APPLICATION DEADLINE FEBRUARY 28, 2016

GRADUATE STUDENT GRANT-$500 (at the dissertation stage)
APPLICATION DEADLINE FEBRUARY 28, 2016

SCMLA CONFERENCE TRAVEL GRANTS
$200 for Graduate Students at the doctoral level
$500 for Faculty and Independent Scholars
APPLICATION DEADLINE APRIL 30, 2016

SCMLA BOOK AWARD-$500
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MARCH 31, 2016
Scholarly and critical books and editions published in 2015 by SCMLA members are eligible for the 2016 prize. Nominations, including self-nominations, will be accepted from members or from the publisher of an eligible book. Send two copies of the nominated book by March 31, 2016 to SCMLA President for 2016, Julie Chappell.

Dr. Julie A. Chappell
Dept. of English & Languages
Grant 312 Box T-0300
Tarleton State University
Stephenville, TX 76402

Nominees must be members by March 1; nominees must be current SCMLA members and must have been members for the previous two years. The successful candidate for the SCMLA Book Award presented in 2016 will be announced at the conference in Dallas, TX.
South Central MLA Deadlines for 2016

February 2016
28 Deadline for receipt of Graduate Student Grant applications to the SCMLA office
28 Deadline for receipt of SCMLA Faculty Research Travel Grant applications to SCMLA office
28 Deadline for receipt of Benson-SCMLA Faculty Research Grant applications to SCMLA office
28 Deadline for SCMLA office receipt of Final Proposals for Special Sessions for Nashville 2016

March 2016
31 Proposers of Special Sessions for Nashville 2016 will be notified
31 Deadline for Book Prize Nominations to Jeanne Gillespie, SCMLA President
31 Deadline for submission of Papers/Abstracts for Nashville

April 2016
30 Deadline for SCMLA office receipt of Final Program Copy for all 2016 sessions
30 Deadline for requesting audio-visual equipment for Nashville 2016
30 Deadline for receipt of SCMLA Conference Travel Grants applications to SCMLA office
30 Deadline for 2016 conference participants to become members of SCMLA

May 2016
31 Deadline for SCMLA office receipt of items to be included in the Summer Newsletter

August 2016
31 Deadline for registration for Nashville Conference
31 Deadline for 2016 Conference Paper

Prize submissions
31 Deadline for voting for SCMLA Executive Committee

October 2016
23 Deadline for 2016 conference hotel reservation at

Future Conference Dates

2016
Dallas, Texas
November 3-5
Sheraton Downtown Dallas

2017
Tulsa, Oklahoma
October 5-8
Renaissance Tulsa
Thank you, 2015 Friends of SCMLA!

Silver
Lynn Alexander
Melissa Bailar
Nancy LaGreca
Vernon Miles
Charles Wukasch

Gold
Frieda Blackwell
John G. Morris

Platinum
Debra Andrist

2015 Sustaining Department Members

Midwestern State U
Department of Foreign Languages

To renew your Sustaining Departmental membership for 2015, please contact us at SCMLA@ou.edu

Conference Registration
Deadline for Nashville 2015 is August 31st

Register online here. During the registration process, you will have also the opportunity to vote in SCMLA elections. Candidate statements can be found on our website.

SCMLA MEMBER NEWS


Amy Cummins, Associate Professor of English at the University of Texas Pan American, was given the 2014-2015 New Faculty Mentoring Award on 1 May 2015 from the UTPA Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.


Research Fellowships offered at Harry Ransom Center

The Harry Ransom Center, a humanities research library and museum at The University of Texas at Austin, invites SCMLA members to apply to its research fellowship program. The Ransom Center awards approximately 50 fellowships to post-doctoral and independent scholars each year—with one annual fellowship designated specifically for SCMLA members—to support on-site research in its collections. The Center also supports dissertation fellowships for graduate students admitted to candidacy.

The Ransom Center’s collections include 42 million manuscripts, nearly one million rare books, five million photographs, and 100,000 works of art, as well as major holdings in film and the performing arts. Highlights from the collections include the manuscripts of Julian Barnes, Tim O’Brien, T. C. Boyle, J. M. Coetzee, Penelope Fitzgerald, Spalding Gray, Denis Johnson, Doris Lessing, Norman Mailer, David Mamet, Jayne Anne Phillips, James Salter, and Anne Sexton; the publishing archives of Alfred Knopf and McSweeney’s; the film archives of Robert De Niro and Gone With The Wind producer David O. Selznick; and the Watergate papers of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

The collections support research across such wide-ranging disciplines as African and African American studies, Jewish studies, Latin American studies, women’s and gender studies, detective and science fiction studies, publishing history, travel literature, and more. Fellows’ research topics reflect the breadth of the Center’s holdings. Projects of recent fellows include “Punctuation and Personality in the Printed Plays of Early Modern England,” “Imagined Heartlands: Post-Postmodern Literature and the American Midwest,” “The Aesthetics and Poetics of Big Print in Screenwriting Practice,” and “W. B. Yeats and the Writing of Art.”

Fellows incorporate their findings into scholarly articles and monographs, conference presentations, cultural histories, critical editions, exhibitions, and biographies. During their residencies, fellows also engage in an environment of intellectual exchange at the Ransom Center and across The University of Texas at Austin campus. Throughout the year, the Center hosts lunches and weekly coffee gatherings that create opportunities for fellows, independent research visitors, Ransom Center staff, and other members of the University community to discuss the work taking place within the Center’s collections.

Fellows have also presented talks to the Ransom Center’s members and to University and community groups.

The fellowships range from one to three months, with stipends of $3,000 per month. Also available are $1,200 or $1,700 travel stipends and dissertation fellowships with a $1,500 stipend. All applicants, with the exception of those applying for dissertation fellowships, must have a Ph.D. or be independent scholars with a substantial record of achievement.

To be eligible for the SCMLA fellowship, a one-month award jointly sponsored by the Ransom Center and the South Central Modern Language Association, applicants must be current SCMLA members who have been members for the previous two years at the time of application. SCMLA Executive Committee members are ineligible.

The fellowships range from one to three months, with stipends of $3,000 per month. Also available are $1,200 or $1,700 travel stipends and dissertation fellowships with a $1,500 stipend. All applicants, with the exception of those applying for dissertation fellowships, must have a Ph.D. or be independent scholars with a substantial record of achievement.

For this reason, SCMLA can no longer accept individual requests that sessions be scheduled at a particular time or on a specific conference day with one notable exception: if we are informed that a panelist cannot present on a specific day because of religious beliefs, we will make every effort to accommodate. Please be sure to make these special requests at the time when you submit session proposals.

Thank you in advance for your understanding regarding this change.

Sincerely,

Emily Johnson
Executive Director

Reminder About Scheduling Requests

Dear Members:

At this time of year, the SCMLA office is covered in long printer sheets of scheduling information. As SCMLA has grown, creating the conference schedule has become increasingly complex. We work hard to make sure that no member is scheduled to be in two places at once, try not to run panels on similar topics against each other, and places panels that require projectors in rooms that will offer them. In years in which many of our regular sessions split to accommodate interest, this job is particularly hard. A single individual (the chair of a multi-panel regular session; a member of the Executive Committee) may have five or six engagements over the course of the conference; more and more panels require AV each year.

For this reason, SCMLA can no longer accept individual requests that sessions be scheduled at a particular time or on a specific conference day with one notable exception: if we are informed that a panelist cannot present on a specific day because of religious beliefs, we will make every effort to accommodate. Please be sure to make these special requests at the time when you submit session proposals.

Thank you in advance for your understanding regarding this change.

Sincerely,

Emily Johnson
Executive Director
The Sights and Sounds of Nashville

The sounds coming from Nashville are those authentic, soulful, powerful, and unpretentious sounds that can only come from the place where music is inspired, written, recorded, and performed. There is only one Music City. And today, Nashville continues its emergence as a cultural, artistic, and entertainment-rich destination, filled with a myriad of unique music and event venues, art galleries, botanical gardens and greenways, plantation homes, honky-tonks, professional sports, and award-winning dining. Nashville’s palate offers everything from Southern fare to haute cuisine with quite literally everything in between. Whether it’s a family-friendly meal, dinner and a show, or a romantic night out, the city’s restaurants serve every dish with a side of Southern hospitality. Nashville has a host of unique attractions, including the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum, The Parthenon, The Frist Center for the Visual Arts, the Grand Ole Opry, the Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson, Cheekwood, Belle Meade Plantation, Ryman Auditorium, and the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. Nashville never sleeps. You can hear great music 24/7, 365 days a year. You’ll catch star-dusted pickers and songwriters all over town, in places like the bluegrass venue Station Inn, the rockin’ Exit/In, or the song-centered Bluebird Cafe. Of course, the ultimate country venue is the Grand Ole Opry House, where legends and current stars perform on the nation’s longest-running live radio program. With its charming mix of musical, historical, and cultural flavors, Nashville is truly a city for all seasons and styles. Nashville’s promise is to provide the ultimate musical entertainment experience celebrated throughout our diverse cultural and entertainment offerings. So whether it’s listening to live music, soaking in the art scene, exploring history, or simply relaxing, you’ll find many ways to enjoy Music City and discover why music calls us home.

The famed Parthenon, located directly across the street from the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt in Centennial Park
An Address from Past President Melissa Bailar

An abridged version of the presidential address delivered at the Business Meeting at the 2014 Austin Conference

“Innovative Interdisciplinarity”: The Eclipse of the Humanities?

As budgets across the nation rapidly shrink not only for the humanities but for higher education in general, as tenure-track positions cede to temporary faculty jobs, as departments combine or disappear, and as schools eliminate graduate programs, an examination of the rise in funding and enthusiasm for interdisciplinary programs raises critical questions. What is interdisciplinarity and can it save academia and the humanities in particular, or does it contribute to the decline of higher education? My twelve years at a humanities research center and participation in international consortia of such centers have allowed me to have a hand in shaping several successful interdisciplinary programs, as well as several unsuccessful ones. I have seen the motivations behind the establishment of interdisciplinary agendas and the ways in which administrations have assessed and publicized their value for faculty, students, and occasionally non-academic publics. The fervor for interdisciplinarity has supported some opportunities of great research and pedagogical value, but it has also contributed to the dilution of rigorous humanistic research and deep disciplinary training and the justification for the reduction of tenure lines.

If we consider a “discipline” to be a field of study recognized by higher education that has clear domains of expertise, established methodologies and underlying assumptions, recognizable research questions, and scholarly communities, “interdisciplinarity” refers to intentional exchanges across these fields. At their best, interdisciplinary programs provide bases for faculty from across a college or university to work together on research that no one field can adequately investigate and engage students who would otherwise not be interested in specific fields. Many promise opportunities to collaborate with scholars from around the world and to produce the tangible, quantifiable results that administrations, boards, and funding agencies recognize and reward. Certainly many interdisciplinary programs have achieved all of these, some so successfully that they have formed into new disciplines themselves. Yet many have consumed scarce resources (time, support, and funding) without much benefit to faculty or students.

At the university where I work in Houston, like most institutions of higher education, we have built or are in the process of building interdisciplinary programs that succeed and others that do not. One example that did not go very well was our foray into “energy humanities.” Thousands of oil companies have bases in Houston, a city with the nickname “Energy Capitol of the World.” These companies earmark funds for research, and understandably my university would like to receive some of it. Indeed, an incoming provost established “Energy” as one of the university’s three initiatives in 2010. Because this was an area to which many institutional and extra-institutional resources were heading, the humanities administration (already a small division in a school known for science and engineering) sought ways that it could participate in studies of energy as well.

However, not many humanities faculty are interested in developing or teaching a field as undefined as energy humanities (distinct from and often opposed to “environmental humanities”), and those who are interested likely do not approach it in ways that would appeal to corporate interests. Studies of Emile Zola’s naturalist account of the coal mining industry in *Germinal*, of the documentary *Promised Land*’s portrayal of Western oil ventures in Ghana and Nigeria, of the 2012 film *Promised Land*’s accounts of fracking, or of Marguerite Duras’s and Alain Resnais’s representations of severe radiation poisoning in *Hiroshima mon amour* (especially in light of the Fukushima disaster), for example, would reveal aspects of the energy industry that are counter to companies’ financial and marketing interests. Students majoring in the humanities likewise tend to eschew internships that would help such companies become palatable to communities into which they want to expand or those traumatized by industrial accidents resulting from engineering or management oversights.

Top-down programs of research and pedagogy in which corporate interests define the objects of study also have a way of curtailing academic freedom. (I have, for example, removed much of the criticism and detail from my talk on this topic at the 2014 SCMLA conference for this electronically printed essay. As a temporary faculty member, I am aware of the many possible negative repercussions for openly criticizing institutional priorities.) Such initiatives often engage in “cluster” hiring, taking on faculty who can teach in two areas rather than one. Administrators smattered across the campus rather than departmental hiring committees often approve these new faculty members. When cluster hiring occurs around a relatively new area of interest for the university, hires are often on the level of one-to-two-year postdoctoral fellowships rather than permanent faculty. Fellows tend to receive lower salaries and bear the weight of developing new initiatives while remaining acutely aware of the transitory nature of their positions. In relying on short-term junior fellows who are often disconnected from academic departments, universities flatten expertise, prioritizing economic savings through increasingly centralized decision-making in which tenure-track lines (and hence academic freedom) decline. Yet with the current state of the humanities job markets, junior scholars apply in droves to such positions, and though some of them are interested in such topics, others alter their research to reflect expertise in these new institutional priorities. Since these top-down programs appear to generate themselves (the competitiveness of the applications leading to quantified claims of research interest, the presentations and publications of postdoctoral fellows masking the possible indifference of permanent faculty, for example), do such “successful” examples matter to those of us interested in close reading, language acquisition, or film studies? Are concerns about what should constitute university priorities the jurisdiction of administration, or should faculty and students contribute to such conversations? Do such top-down activities affect our individual research and pedagogical agendas?
Institutions usually expect interdisciplinary initiatives to produce quantifiable “outcomes” (grants, books, courses, conferences, majors, etc.) that they can report to their boards, to potential students and their families, and to industry. At many universities, the humanities now must report on research and pedagogical activities according to rubrics developed by the sciences or corporations. Yet an article in biochemistry, often co-written by a dozen or more faculty, should not carry the same weight as a single-authored article on Enlightenment literature. Student participants in a team of engineers do not need to put the same work into creating a poster display of their problem-solving mechanism as do those presenting individual twenty-minute conference papers on lyricism in North African film. A first-year physics class may reach 400 students, but is the pedagogical impact twenty times as great as that of a first-year seminar on Shakespeare capped at 20 students? A grant proposal in nanotechnology might require upwards of $10 million dollars, given the expense of the necessary equipment, yet a humanist can conduct a research project with less than one-hundredth of that amount – or nothing at all. When the dollar signs and large assessment numbers take precedence over the long-term qualitative aspects of a program, the sciences garner the spotlight in the press, both at the university and the national levels. “Interdisciplinarity” may thus not be interdisciplinary at all, but rather a way to bury some disciplines in the service of others in a system that does not recognize their contributions to larger fields of knowledge, perception, and human capability.

One interdisciplinary area that appears to counter such discouraging trends and place the sciences in the service of the humanities is the broad area of “digital humanities” or DH, yet this too tends to split faculty interests, time, and energy, requiring them to work on materials and projects in which they were not originally interested while their own strengths and concerns take a back seat. Certainly, there are many valuable DH projects in which computational technology makes manuscripts, texts, images, recordings, and more accessible to scholars and students around the globe; enables different sorts of research questions and ways of investigating them; and forges collaborative teams that work across disciplinary and institutional methodologies and languages. I myself have benefited from and enjoyed working on several DH projects, yet I recognize that the academic and public excitement surrounding this type of work tends to diminish the recognition of important advances in the majority of humanities research that does not require the use of digital technology. What if, because of grant opportunities and institutional support, a French literature professor, rather than researching female sexuality in Marguerite de Navarre’s Heptameron, instead had to learn Python programming and ArcGIS software? That would be fine if mapping networks or searching through vast quantities of records is of primary importance to that scholar. But if the faculty member diverts energy from her areas of expertise in order to benefit from seed funding when university resources are scarce, or a graduate student feels the need to adopt breadth of skills rather than disciplinary depth to be better situated for the job market, economic factors and top-down priorities are driving DH research and learning.

Yet interdisciplinarity can be rewarding and productive if it stems directly from the interests of faculty and students. For example, Social Justice programs flourish at multiple colleges and universities, stemming from 1970s efforts to break down the “ivory tower” image of academe by directing its knowledge towards the public good. Such programs continue to thrive today, bringing in faculty from multiple departments, granting majors and minors, establishing strong community connections, and providing meaningful learning experiences for students. While such programs are no longer considered “innovative” and tend not to bring in significant funding, they have advanced faculty and student interests and benefitted communities through their interdisciplinary structures.

Likewise, Medieval Studies programs have long histories at many college and universities, having grown out of the recognition that an interdisciplinary approach to the Medieval creates productive faculty and student communities. Most programs offer majors or minors because students have demonstrated steady interest in this time period, in part thanks to engaging literature, games, and films that take place in medieval Europe. Such programs often offer exciting learning experiences, as well, including archaeological digs, study abroad, or rare manuscript analysis. Such programs do little to mark an institution as a place of innovative interdisciplinarity, but they are rich in innovative research.

Another interdisciplinary area emerging at many college and universities, Medical Humanities, could turn into another such long-term success or could contribute to the demise of the humanities. Pre-med students in particular clamor for courses in this broad area, and both humanities and science faculty develop and teach them. Is this a way to form new generations of medical practitioners with historical, cultural, and ethical understandings of the role of medicine and an appreciation for the work that humanists do? Is it an opening to re-invigorate the humanities, particularly at institutions strong in the sciences? Is it an opportunity for important critical examinations of medical systems and notions of health? Or will it further diminish the autonomy of humanistic research priorities and training in the way that industry-based agendas often have?

If we consider universities and colleges to be sites of both education and innovation, the needs and interests of students and faculty must come first. Faculty are experts in their fields who need time and resources to develop new insights and disseminate them. Lasting and successful innovation stems from their research, not from administrative structures and the external interests of industry. And we need to continue to train students to become experts in well-established fields, for with disciplinarity, the “inter-“ has no place to go.

-Melissa Bailar, Rice University
It’s time to renew your free first-year digital subscription to World Literature Today.

 Redeem a 50% discount exclusive for SCMLA members
 www.zinio.com/SCMLA
 Reg. price: $15  You pay: $7.50

 Want to switch to a print subscription? Get 25% off with the following coupon code!
 COUPON CODE  SCMLA2015
 shop.worldliteraturetoday.org

 For assistance with your subscription or renewal, visit worldliteraturetoday.org/SCMLA

World Literature Today
Your passport to great reading.
CONFERENCE HOTEL INFORMATION
Our 72nd annual conference will be held at the
Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt
2555 West End Avenue
Nashville, TN 37203
Saturday, October 31 to Tuesday November 3

South Central MLA rate:
$139 single/double
plus tax

Reservations:
Phone: 615-321-1300
Online: [Click here]

Please state you want the “South Central Modern Language Association rate” when making your reservations. All conference participants must reserve their rooms with The Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt by September 30, 2015 in order to receive the conference rate.

Nashville Ground Transportation and Parking:

Alternate Transportation to and from Airport:
Grayline Airport Express; fee: $12 USD (one way); on request
Website: [http://graylinetn.com/]

Bus Service to and from Airport:
Estimated Fee: $2 USD (one way)
More Information can be found [here]

Taxi to and from Airport:
Estimated taxi fare: $25 USD (one way)
More information can be found [here]

Hotel Parking:
On-site parking, fee: $24 plus tax USD daily
Valet parking, fee: $26 plus tax USD daily