

4Humanities@UCSB

Meeting 2 - Core Issues in Public Discourse on the Humanities (November 14, 2011)

- Sign-up sheet

NEWS & BUSINESS:

1. NEWS: Local Chapters and the Web Site

- a. **New sidebar on 4Humanities site >**
 - i. **Local Chapters section of site >**
 1. 4Humanities@UCSB >
 - a. Participants (23 faculty & staff; 16 grad students)
 - b. Meetings
 - c. Private Library (Jasperjohns458!)
- b. **4Humanities@UCI:**
- c. **4Humanities@CSUN:**
 - i. "Disseminating the Humanities" video interview series

2. BUSINESS: Next Set of Meetings

- a. **Meeting 2 (today) - "Core Issues in Public Discourse on the Humanities" (leader: Claudio Fogu)**
- b. **Meeting 3 (later this quarter) - "Framing/Strategies for Action" (leader: Linda Adler-Kassner)** Examples of Linda's work on the topic:
 - i. BOOK: Adler-Kassner, Linda. *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2008.
 - ii. Book: Adler-Kassner, Linda and Peggy O'Neill. *Reframing Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2010.
 - iii. ESSAY: Adler-Kassner, Linda. "The WPA as Activist: Systematic Strategies for Framing, Action, and Representation." In Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser, eds. *Going Public: The WPA as Advocate for Engagement*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2010. 216-236.
 - iv. ESSAY: Adler-Kassner, Linda and Susanmarie Harrington. "In the Here and Now: Public Policy and Basic Writing" *Journal of Basic Writing* (Spring 2007): 27-48.
- c. **Meeting 4 (early next quarter?) - "New Media and Humanities Advocacy: A Planning Seminar (leader: Alan Liu)**
 - i. Ask people to read or browse a collection of resources, examples, etc. intended to provide a palette of current media options and formats.
 - ii. At the meeting itself, we could open with general discussion about strategies for using the new media for humanities advocacy. But since many in our group are not focused on digital media per se, there likely isn't any call for an extended discussion about the philosophy, implementations, and technical features of digital media in and of itself.
 - iii. Therefore, we will at the meeting jump right into brainstorming how to produce things individually or collectively that can show up on the 4Humanities site. That will be a concrete way of discussing the affordances of the new technologies.
- d. **Thinking Ahead to Production:** While we are devoting ourselves to necessary foundational work in today's and next time's meeting to foundational issues in

framing/strategizing an intervention in public discourse about the humanities, it is not too soon to begin thinking forward to Meeting 4 and production ideas:

- i. An initial hands-on challenge: producing and recruiting content for the 4Humanities special project, "Humanities, Plain & Simple":
 1. Idea of project
 2. Examples of Anthony Garcia & Michelle Kassorla contributions (up on the website)
 3. Our challenge: apply what we learn in today's meeting and the meeting led by Linda to:
 - a. Identify one or more audiences and/or stakeholders (or potential stakeholders) who are or should be invested in Humanities
 - b. Contribute our own "Humanities, Plain & Simple" statements with these audiences in mind:
<http://humanistica.ualberta.ca/2011/11/humanities-plain-simple/>
 - c. Recruit statements from strategically placed people (e.g., non-humanists, scientists, businessmen, politicians, entertainers, K-12 teachers, administrators, students, parents, children)
 - d. Develop other possible materials -- brainstorm the use of visual and multimedia means to present (or accompany) "plain & simple" statements.
 - i. Royal Society for the Arts videos—e.g., Rifkin, Jeremy. "The Empathic Civilisation." RSA Animate. May 6, 2010: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7AWnffRc7g>
 - ii. Emory College *Why Study the Humanities in 60 Seconds* videos - Example: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=jBZoFzP3qRs

Core Issues in Public Discourse on the Humanities (Claudio leads discussion):

- This first meeting is an opportunity for everyone to bring to the table their perspectives on public discourse in the humanities today. What type of story is most important to tell today about the humanities?
- Go around room: What are some pressing issues about the humanities and how we understand how they are viewed today?
 - o Bill Warner: Davidson-Goldberg piece; their formulation of the humanities: we teach meaning, values, significance. This is correct but also quite blurry. If we are going to convince non-humanists that the humanities are essential, we have to frame the discussion as an argument that is fairly simple: "We are the operating system for all other knowledge." It is a problem when "research" is defined as the cure for cancer, at that level of practicality; need to expand this understanding.

- Dana Solomon: emphasize Davidson's "Strangers on a Train;" need to reframe basic standards of learning (reading, writing, arithmetic): Are these still three basic foundations of education? How can we deal with these three topics in different ways?
- Julia Panko: Qualitative vs. the quantitative: quantitative is not usually as simple and straightforward as it is presented as being. Humanists bring a type of critique to the ways in which we produce and arrange knowledge that is also useful for the quantitative.
 - Debates about value of the humanities generally fall into two categories: 1) valuable in themselves, framing them practically is to misunderstand them; 2) the humanities are practical, skills for jobs, bring in money to the university. Third term: can we think about a way to frame it that is outside of or in addition to these frames? What is the way that humanities brings knowledge to the world?
- Ann Taves: Lakoff and Ganz articles; issue of framing is really important. We already have our institutes: aren't universities the institutes that ought to make the case for the humanities? We have "think-tank" like institutes but we aren't using them.
 - Academy of Arts and Sciences video: every form of expressive creation, every form of collectivity, all systems of value and systems of exchange: this is thinking in terms of the structure of the university about what the humanities do.
 - Steve Jobs and the importance of the intersection between the humanities and technology: need to add beauty to this paradigm, we can see through Apple products how beauty added to technology makes a huge difference.
- Leslie Hammer: *Mother Jones* article about audience; need to take audience into account when making an argument. We might want to think about consulting with people outside of the humanities to talk to them about advocating for the humanities in order to push us to think about issues of framing.
- Pax Hehmeyer: On a practical level, there is the need to attract majors that want to study the humanities and feel they can use it to get a job. We can't necessarily compete with research projects about curing cancer, but such a program involves humanities aspects too. How do we bring more majors in?
- Cole Cohen: Fish article and his position that the humanities are their own good: how do we defend something that people within the humanities feel doesn't need to be defended.
 - Stanford Humanities Lab articles: what does collaborative post-disciplinary space look like? Can we see the IHC as a space like this?
- Harold Marcuse: We can be seen as games/software that run above the OS; interest in advocating for getting out of the commodification of everything. We don't need to compete with solar panels but figure out what to do with them.

- Eileen Boris: Humanities broken down is Human-it-ties; value of the humanities is about how we live, how we get meaning in a world where our employment is our primary identity. The humanities have affect, and this is powerful.
- Gary Coleman: AAS video and Lakoff article; the humanities and their applications for the military (Skorton's idea that the humanities are good for intelligence analysis). Skorton framed the issue in a different way and tried to speak to a different audience with regards to the value of the humanities. We need to take inventory of different departments within the humanities feel about framing and think about what *all* of them can agree on about the value of the humanities. There are certain things we need to agree on and focus on those "strategic initiatives," as Lakoff says.
- Bob: Natural philosophy and moral philosophy; humanities were under "moral philosophy." One way to make the argument about the humanities on a powerful, gut level is to say that the humanities are those disciplines that deal with the moral. Moral thought is located in the humanities, not the sciences. Morals, mores, customs. Can the urgency language about morals produces be mobilized for a defense of the humanities?
- Zach Horton: Solutions-based orientation to research is really effective because it is oriented toward identifying problems; the humanities can do this too. Need to identify problems the humanities can fix. In terms of selling it to non-humanities people, we can identify a lot of problems the humanities can help solve.
- Alan: Three main topics in readings/viewings today:
 - 1) We need to reframe false binary of utility/humanities as their own good; DH community debate between builders and interpreters was more evidence of this. Today to build anything requires a team, need designers, interpreters, historians, engineers and programmers, in order to build anything. This is the frame we should focus on.
 - 2) Lakoff piece: We need to be honest with ourselves and realize the implicit framing of the problem we are bringing to bear on it as academics. Not at all clear that the humanities are the same as what happens in the humanities in the academy. What are the conservative humanities? We have to reframe the argument so that we can conceive of ourselves talking to someone who isn't in the university. We need to reframe what the humanities might mean to a broader audience.
 - 3) There is a kind of fuzziness in our own minds about what the relationship is between the humanities and the liberal arts. The liberal arts include the sciences and the social sciences. Sometimes we are making arguments for one or the other. This whole problem needs to be reframed: wholistic ecology argument. Not going to get radical innovation without investment in the humanities.
- Anna Brusutti: Printed out comments to Fish articles by mistake, read them though; everyone in the comments was speaking a different language, everyone

had a different reaction to the Fish articles. Need to establish guidelines for civilized exchange and create a space for it.

- Emphasis on educational aspect and the approach to education and children humanities curriculum: reading, writing, and reasoning. Math is now very quickly applied to science; whole premise of math is now understanding of systemic implications. The humanities are uniquely positioned to enfold this. **The humanities should be concerned with the education of children.**
- Dan Reynolds: I see less entrenchment against and dismissal of the humanities within scientific communities; sense of ambivalence about what we do that can offer the scientists in their own work. Sciences moving toward questions of epistemology, perception, things that are humanities-centric topics; theory of literature and media as most nuanced record of knowledge, perception, cognition that there is in the world. **Need to present work we do as a complement and as a resource on which science can draw.**
- Kevin Kearney: **There is a disconnect between research and teaching; disconnect between how value is applied to research and how value is applied to teaching.** “Real” value of what we do is translating that to students: we get paid because of teaching, not for publishing articles, necessarily. How can we bring those two values together, if that is even possible.
- Chris Newfield:
 - 1) **We should do the hardcore, undiluted radical version of us rather than try to fit into university research structures.** We should be proud of what we bring as a platform for creativity, for radical change, for alternative thinking.
 - 2) I would like us to think about **an infrastructure agenda**, defining what humanists scholars need in the way of material conditions and work practices in order to make their research happen. Need to make arguments on the basis of what we need to do our jobs; what basis would be for rebalancing the budget.
 - 3) The budget awareness issue is absolutely vital because it is what administrators use to determine how resources have been spent. We need to be clear about what it is we are taking in, what we’re not getting, what we need to present a larger budgetary framework to make our contributions crystal clear to everyone. I think that what is happening now is the most energetic and dynamic moment I have seen in the last 20 years around the values of non-quantitative methods of learning.
- Elizabeth Cook: Need to make an agenda for the kinds of values we would like to see articulated; this debate has been unfolding for years.
- Linda Adler-Kassner: Think about kinds of narratives that have been developed around topics and **think about actionable plans we can develop around these narratives.** Who are the audiences who are most invested in this? For what purposes are they invested or should they be invested? How can we think about this?

- Claudio Fogu: We might want to bring ideas about reframing to the next meeting; important words from this discussion: **reframing, values, utility**. We might think about sending proposals about how to reframe certain issues in the humanities and what potential actions might be through the listserv.
 - o **"Research"** as a term that identifies the difference between the debate now and the debate 10-15 years ago. The ways in which we have had to "live up" to this frame have been detrimental; frame of research as immediate practical benefit.
 - o One of the issues is the need to challenge the structures and framings of the research university, which has called upon the humanities to live up to this understanding of research.
 - o **Relational vs. rational**: definition of the human as relational. Relational is an excellent frame that brings up questions of values. Relational has come to challenge certain ideas about the humanist in a more traditional understanding.
- **Assignment over listserv**: put out a call over listserv for "reframing ideas;" we will create a category page on 4Hum site titled something like "Reframing Ideas" as a place for us to post the ideas that have been sent around.
- Bill Warner: Is there a way of doing both/an in binary of utility/intrinsic value? Need to think about both. We can't abandon more "traditional" understanding of humanities as having intrinsic value but we need to push beyond it.
- Ann Taves: We could assemble lists of rationalities going around about value of the humanities, no need to recreate the wheel. Can we think about play or love and how to connect inherent value that infuse everything that we do?
- Alan Liu: Lakoff article, conservatives have strategic initiatives; they are tactically smart in choosing to focus public attention on discrete issues of these initiatives. We should look at what clusters together as a strategic initiative; if you buy into one idea you have to buy into both.
- Claudio Fogu: There is one fundamental issue that we have accepted but that is very detrimental to what we do: the issue of student evaluations. This is unacceptable on many levels; we abdicate any and all educational values. It devalues the students as well. This is one place where Lakoff has helped me think about this slippery slope.
- Linda Adler-Kassner: **Who is audience? What other connotations can we attach to certain words that circulate about the humanities?** Discussion about the humanities is embedded in larger discussion about the value/purpose of education. We have to think about what the frame of this discussion is (career readiness – CCR agenda). Audience, purpose, keywords, connotations.
- Alan Liu: "21st Century Enlightenment" piece from RSA site. Insight of opening gambit is powerful reframing move, has a kind of strategic initiative focus to it (renewed emphasis on a public sphere).
- Bill Warner: part of Re-Enlightenment Project; last event in conference over summer was going to RSA and listening to Matthew Taylor speak. What's smart about Taylor is that he shows us how important advertising is, he is an ad for a kind of reform. He knows how important it is to find a common language for people who are not in the academy. We need ads.

- Linda Adler-Kassner: **Need to identify achievable goals as well as larger goals around common messages.** Need to help other people get those messages out.
- Chris Newfield: having undergrads in Global California class write a book together; enables them to access parts of their experience they don't feel authorized to access in other areas of life. Could publish this on 4Humanities site.
- Alan Liu: Need to think about scalable projects, things we can produce ourselves on top of all of our other responsibilities.
- Claudio: How can we do projects in a way that will get the attention of those in the administration? Defense of a non-instrumental life, etc, at the same time as being valuable to society. How do we have our value recognized by the institutions?
- Chris Newfield: **Offense over defense;** we don't need to be valued by administrative structures. We need to figure out what we need; need to introduce "squeaks of need" into a system that is oriented around squeaky wheels
- Harold Marcuse: We need to figure out what we want to focus on, need to harness digital technology to do this. It would be really important to be able to pool creative energies of us and other 4Humanities groups using digital technologies. Importance of crowdsourcing for library resources. Platform for responding to Humanities Plain and Simple texts.
- Alan Liu: **Put out a call for an instance of CommentPress and ideas for how we can institute a polling mechanism.** Might be nice to have a one-week polling exercise to see how people feel about it.
- Harold Marcuse: We aren't the people we are trying to reach; need to find out who is responding.
- Dan Reynolds: More action-oriented thing we might do: try to identify common situations people get into where human feeling seems to be missing. Discussion recently in the news of doctors being non-empathetic or sympathetic to their patients; identify a few common situations like this to try to trace out what kind of lack of humanities training is underpinning these situations. Make a practical case for where the humanities are missing in our lives. "Where humanity is missing, the humanities are missing."
- Bill Warner: Need to think about migration to teams; what happens when you begin to work as a team is that you begin to come up with a different definition of critical humanities research. **Change the humanities as we defend it.**
- Alan Liu: It may come down to hard-nosed politics. Need to talk to an administrator in a way that makes what we want clear. **Create an agenda for what an ideal, practical humanities lab would look like, put a price tag on it, and then begin lobbying.**
- Bob Williams: That's administrative task; then there is larger and deeper task of changing cultural attitudes toward the humanities. Have to fit on several different fronts and we need to distinguish them. How do we address different kinds of publics?
- Claudio Fogu: That is the purpose of the next meeting, to define audiences. Immediate potential task: accreditation of undergraduate programs. How do we respond to surveys like this?
- Linda Adler-Kassner: We always get further when we connect what we want with people's best interests. **WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) is a good**

example of how we can take an advantage of something that might not seem like it is to our advantage and make it be to our advantage. WASC is interested in helping departments develop student learning outcomes; these are what you want, not what WASC wants. We have to be able to say what students are learning and why it is important. Have to think about “assessable,” rather than “measurable,” skills. Asking the right kinds of questions can be really great for making the right kinds of cases. It is a good example of tying our interests to the self-interests of the university at large.

- Chris: Have people write to him with lists of what you need that you don't have in order to do your job. Start with stuff that is embarrassingly humble; Chris would like to post it.