Saul O Sidore Memorial Lecture Series to Ask:

Can Public Schools Reduce Inequality?

The 2008-2009 Sidore Lecture Series will examine the role of public education in shaping 21st century American society. The series, Education and Opportunity: Can Public Schools Reduce Inequality?, seeks to spur broad discussion about the great vision of American education as the means to a more egalitarian society.

Funding for public education has been in the New Hampshire headlines for the past fifteen years. Nationally, intense debate continues over issues such as No Child Left Behind, alternative schools, student evaluation, and teacher accountability. The upcoming Sidore Lecture Series will bring an interdisciplinary approach to the concepts underlying current policy issues in public education. The series is linked thematically to the 2008-2009 UNH Discovery Program Dialogue, The Growing Divide: A UNH Dialogue on Poverty and Opportunity.

Organized by a team from the UNH Education Department, Sociology Department, and the Carsey Institute, six lectures will each focus on a separate theme about public education and the promise of upward social mobility.

According to Mil Duncan, Director of the Carsey Institute, “No one ideological perspective dominates the series, nor does one vantage point. We are deeply committed to the value of diverse perspectives from researchers, policymakers, activists, and practitioners.”

Planned by Liza Finkel (Education), Scott Fletcher (Education), Sally Ward (Sociology), and Duncan (Carsey Institute), the series will look at the philosophical and historical perspectives of public education with respect to social inequality. “Speakers will address how the growing diversity among public school students, alternative school models, and current ways of measuring student achievement impact social inequality,” says Scott Fletcher.

The Saul O Sidore Memorial Lecture Series was established in 1965 in memory of Saul O Sidore of Manchester, New Hampshire. The purpose of the series is to offer the University community and the state of New Hampshire programs that raise critical and sometimes controversial issues facing our society. Saul O Sidore Memorial Lecture Series is sponsored by the University of New Hampshire Center for the Humanities.
We’ve begun a process of strategic planning in the Center for the Humanities, working with a group of faculty, administrators, and friends. This builds on last year’s exciting series, Humanities Conversations: The End(s) of the Humanities, which we sponsored along with the Department of English. Conversations featured faculty panels talking about a wide range of subjects and ideas, and those led to our thinking about what the Center might be in the future. For a moment, though, I want to talk about the past.

When I came to the University of New Hampshire to direct the then-new Center, the National Endowment for the Humanities had just awarded us a challenge grant to build an endowment. That endowment funds many of our endeavors, ranging from faculty fellowships to interdisciplinary seminars and working groups. Once one of the largest program endowments in the university, other gifts and fund-raising efforts in recent years have produced endowments that dwarf ours. One goal of strategic planning is to lay a foundation for future fund-raising, for we will want to augment our resources considerably if we are to re-conceptualize the humanities center. In preparation for planning, I’ve been revisiting the proposal that led to the challenge grant, because it laid out a blueprint for the Center for the Humanities, one that has largely proven to be useful today, roughly twenty years later. The Center was established to nurture and promote excellence in the humanities, broadly conceived, focusing particularly on faculty research, curriculum development, and public programs. It was also to become a kind of crossroads, where interdisciplinary collaboration would develop, a place rich in conversation and interaction among faculty beyond their departments. As the authors of the proposal wrote,

We are at a point where we must make greater efforts to support the dedication and perseverance of humanities scholars. Although research within humanities disciplines is often not as expensive as research in the sciences, it does have its costs, and scholarly productivity requires the proper environment and institutional support… Faculty members in the humanities disciplines are particularly hard-pressed.

The proposal goes on to say,

Innovative mechanisms are needed to promote increased scholarly conversation in the humanities, a conversation we deem essential to the comprehensive mission of this university. . . Interdisciplinary inquiry, formerly a buzzword in education, has become normative in the most exciting work in the humanities. Recognizing this, we expect the Center for the Humanities to provide faculty the space and time in which their scholarship can flourish.

Over the years, we’ve largely remained true to the foundational objectives the proposal laid out, while acting entrepreneurially when we perceived opportunities. I want to invite our friends and colleagues to let us know their thoughts as we reflect on where we’ve been and where we might go. Please take this invitation seriously—we’re very interested in hearing from you.

We want, too, to welcome new programs and new staff. Three minors have joined the Center. American Studies, African American Studies, and Race, Culture, and Power are now affiliated with the Center. Together, they are sponsoring programs, working on recruitment, and otherwise trying to build from collaborative strengths. Lesley Rains, who holds an M.A. in history from UNH, has joined our staff as associate coordinator for the minors, and she’s doing excellent work to help build those programs.

And we’re delighted to announce that Mary Jo Alibrio has joined the Center as program coordinator. Formerly the grants officer for New Hampshire Public Radio, Mary Jo brings a wealth of experience and contacts to us, along with a passion for ideas. We’re delighted to welcome her.
The UNH Center for the Humanities is launching a comprehensive oral history project called Our State, Our Stories. The initiative is designed to present New Hampshire issues such as health, work, culture, changing communities, and identity through the use of personal narratives in multi-media public programs. The Center for the Humanities is offering free oral history workshops in communities across New Hampshire during March and April 2008, funded in part by a grant from the New Hampshire Humanities Council (NHHC). These workshops are the first step in a multi-year oral history initiative sponsored by the Center.

During the summer, a specialized workshop will be held in Manchester for immigrant and refugee communities in order to include their voices in statewide programs.

Noted folklorist, Jo Radner will conduct the workshops. A distinguished scholar, writer, performer, and past president of the American Folklore Society, Dr. Radner will guide workshop participants in interview techniques such as effective questioning, following leads, and triggering memories. The technological and legal aspects of oral history will be covered. Dr. Radner has held similar workshops throughout Maine and New England, as well as presenting and performing nationwide at conferences and storytelling festivals.

Our State, Our Stories ultimately will result in the production of innovative public programs, using personal stories to encourage discussion and diffuse mistrust among diverse groups throughout the state.

Sample Projects

**Strawbery Banke Museum** is developing an exhibit for the newly restored Leonard Cotton Tenant House. The exhibit will include oral history interviews with individuals who lived in the house as children in the 1960s.

**A collaborative North Country project** called Collecting Stories, Connecting Communities is sponsored by The New Hampshire Heritage Project, the Monadnock Institute of Nature, Place, and Culture, and the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire. The project will include a series of story circles and a teacher institute, and will culminate in a print anthology of stories.

**The Concord Historical Society** is producing a history of Concord in the 20th Century. Oral history interviews will be the primary sources for this volume.
Mary Malone  
Political Science  
**JUNIOR FELLOW**

**Where’s Dirty Harry When You Need Him?**

Citizens Support for the Rule of Law in Central America

Mary Malone’s research on the impact of crime on the quality of democracy in Latin America addresses two key questions of consequence to the humanities: “How can countries establish the rule of law? How can citizens and leaders be socialized to respect the rule of law?”

The turbulent history of the region in the past few decades first attracted Malone’s attention. “I became interested because as I observed the very promising changes in the region, as countries transitioned from dictatorships—with atrocious human rights violations—to democracy, it seemed that crime was the biggest obstacle these countries faced in consolidating democratic governance. I want to examine whether this crime epidemic can jeopardize democracy and lead citizens to become frustrated with democratic governance and opt for authoritarian alternatives—authoritarian leaders that promise to curb crime with an iron fist.”

Jeannie Sowers  
Political Science  
**JUNIOR FELLOW**

**Re-Mapping the Nation: Authoritarian Rule, Environmental Narratives, and Water Governance in Egypt and Libya**

Why do some states in the Middle East mismanage scarce water resources? Jeannie Sowers contends the answer lies in the “connections between state-building and dramatic transformations of nature.”

Her project seeks to create a “more nuanced understanding of the changing dynamics of authoritarian rule” in Egypt and Libya through an examination of the political leadership’s attempts to create their “imagined communities” through alterations in water use and population distribution.

“I am fascinated with questions of water and resource management, because these issues affect people in their everyday lives. So much of what we read about the Middle East focuses on political phenomena that do not touch most people directly. But whether the quality of water in irrigation canals is suitable for growing crops and whether people have access to clean water for drinking and washing, these issues affect everyone, especially women.”

Kurk Dorsey  
History  
**SENIOR FELLOW**

**Global Diplomacy for a Harsh Environment: Regulating Whaling in the Antarctic**

Kurk Dorsey traces his first interest in his current topic to the Save the Whales movement during his childhood in the 1970s. That fascination continues today and fits neatly into his larger interest in the role of the United States in environmental diplomacy. “The United States played the most important role in creating the International Whaling Commission in 1946, and I have long been fascinated by this attempt to create a global conservationist agenda in that decade,” Dorsey says.

His current project, a diplomatic history of the efforts to regulate whaling during the twentieth century, remains relevant. This was demonstrated during his recent trip to Australia. “The first day there, the newspaper headline about Japanese whaling was NO SHAME with the Japanese flag in the place of the O. My project, in large part, is about how a range of societies thought about whales, both as resources and as symbols of larger issues like environmentalism, scientific authority, and state sovereignty.”

2008-2009 Faculty Fellows

Each academic year, the Center for the Humanities provides an opportunity for junior and senior faculty members to step away from teaching responsibilities and devote themselves full-time to humanities focused research. The 2008-2009 Faculty Fellows represent scholarship at the University of New Hampshire.
A recent resurgence in interest in Seneca’s tragedies, after a century of neglect, has lead Penguin press to commission R. Scott Smith to update what he calls “the moldy translations of the past” with a new translation of six of Seneca’s plays (Oedipus, Hercules Insane, Thyestes, The Trojan Women, Phaedra and Octavia).

Smith aims at readability and, he says, “a re-creation of the original power of Seneca’s poetry.” The power of language keeps this project both interesting and challenging for Smith, who observes, “A close attention to the text can reveal a myriad of subtleties. How incredibly frustrating it can be to try, ineptly at times, to represent those subtleties in English, despite it being my native tongue!… Modern students of drama cannot ignore the influence of Seneca’s tragedies and deserve a translation that is accurate and representative of the original.”

Occasionally, a topic chooses its researcher, which is the case with Janet Aikins Yount. After she wrote review of a Clarissa reprint, the editors of a 16-volume project on Samuel Richardson’s tragic novel Clarissa (1747-48) asked her to do more. She now is wrapping up what turned into a multi-year labor, editing a two-volume collection of twentieth century criticism and response to the novel for The Clarissa Project. Richardson’s novel remains one of the most influential works of fiction ever published.

“The most interesting thing I have learned in the course of my project is how diverse the reception to Clarissa has been among readers from many different walks of life,” says Yount. “Who knew, for example,” she says, “that a book by South African English Professor, Christina Van Heyningen, Clarissa, Poetry and Morals (University of Natal Press, 1963), which contains no references to contemporary politics and was published during a period of harsh governmental censorship, was Van Heyningen’s coded response to the strictures of apartheid?”

“My study of Clarissa’s twentieth century reception will document the ways in which fiction—the novel—has been and continues to be not merely an escapist literary genre aimed at entertaining readers but a powerful vehicle through which people think about and address political, social, ethical, and intellectual problems faced in everyday life.”

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Sidore Series 2007 - 2008

Exploring Democracy

by Rachel Snell

Established in 1965 in memory of Saul O Sidore, a Manchester industrialist, the purpose of the Sidore lecture series is to “offer the university community and the State of NH programs that raise critical and sometimes controversial issues facing our society.” The 2007-2008 lecture series addressed democracy and democratization, two topics that currently generate heated public debate. This year’s lecture series organizer, Mary Malone (Political Science), wanted to enrich that debate by providing participants with the tools necessary to fully understand these topics.

Furthermore, the series demonstrated the wide range of democratic experiences by engaging speakers with diverse backgrounds, including not only academics but also participants in democratic movements as well as policy makers. The series was divided into two parts; the fall semester explored the roots of democracy, its spread around the globe, its benefits and shortcomings, as well as the experience of democratic development in the United States. This semester the focus shifted abroad as speakers explored how democracy has developed in other countries. They focused on factors that allow the successful implementation of democracy and those that impede it.

In late February, I had the opportunity to pose a few questions to Professor Malone and get her reflections on the series thus far.

Rachel Snell: Why do you think democracy and democratization are such hot button topics?

Mary Malone: In the US right now the topics are salient due to the emphasis of current US foreign policy. In particular, the Bush administration has used democracy promotion to justify very controversial policies, such as the war in Iraq. These events have put democratization at the forefront of American public thoughts. Still, democratization became a hot button topic much earlier around the world, as Latin American dictatorships shifted towards democracy in the mid 1980s, followed by the former Soviet satellites in 1990 and African states in the mid 1990s. High profile events, such as the release of Nelson Mandela and subsequent democratization in South Africa really captivated the world’s attention.

RS: What do you think attendees took away from the series?

MM: I hope that attendees were able to have a broader perspective on democratization. There are so many different components to the process, which we tried to address in the series. Democratization involves civil society, elites, foreign assistance, and of course historical experience.

RS: Thus far, have the lectures met your expectations?

MM: Overall, yes. I think that we were able to invite a very diverse group of speakers, whose talks linked well to one another. I was very impressed with the turnout—on average we had approximately 80-100 attendees at each talk.

RS: Is there any sort of follow-up you would recommend for the campus community?

MM: The most important follow-up would be to follow democratization in the news. Current events are dominated by stories of countries transitioning to democracy, and it would be great to apply what attendees have learned this year to current events. For example, it will be fascinating to follow Cuban politics and see if the country moves towards democracy.

Going to Vote IV – M. Georgette
In spring 2007, three interdisciplinary minors—African American Studies, American Studies, and Race, Culture, and Power—came under the administrative umbrella of the Center for the Humanities. One year later, revamped and revitalized, the minors are more active in the UNH community than ever before.

The minors are devoted to building bridges across academic disciplines. To that end, they have been involved in a diverse range of projects for both students and faculty. These projects include: sponsoring a field trip for an Asian Studies class to Boston’s Chinatown, supporting a grant to bring two local musicians to an American Music survey class, purchasing audio recording devices for folklore students, and funding a class trip to the Gulf Coast over Spring Break. The minors also sponsored a well-received essay contest in conjunction with the university’s annual Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration.

For faculty, the minors sponsored a seminar on teaching race at UNH.

Held on March 12, the seminar consisted of a public lecture by Barbara Applebaum, Associate Professor of Cultural Foundations of Education at Syracuse University. Following the lecture, faculty members participated in a roundtable discussion about their experiences teaching race at UNH.

Faculty and students interested in learning more about the minors should visit the program websites: www.unh.edu/afamstudies, www.unh.edu/amstudies, www.unh.edu/rcp or contact Lesley Rains by email (lesley.rains@unh.edu) or at 862-2179.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has announced the annual competition for 2009 Summer Stipends. These $6,000 awards support two consecutive months of research. NEH invites institutions to nominate two proposals from faculty. The Center for the Humanities invites interested faculty to submit preliminary proposals by August 1, 2008. A panel of faculty will meet to recommend two nominees. The final deadline for submitting proposals to NEH is October 1, 2008.

FOR MORE DETAILS:
www.unh.edu/humanities-center
www.neh.gov/GRANTS/guidelines/stipends.html
The UNH Center for the Humanities is sponsoring a free grant workshop with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Participants throughout New England are invited to take advantage of this unique opportunity.

- Learn about NEH funding opportunities, including summer stipends.
- Pick up grant writing tips.
- Find out more about the NEH review process.
- Sign up for an individual meeting with an NEH program officer about your specific proposal.

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