2019-20 annual report
Era ended the academic year in a way none of us could have imagined when we began it. Faced with the coronavirus pandemic in mid-March, ASU moved its entire operations online, and we also transitioned the Institute for Humanities Research (IHR) online, and we in the Institute for Humanities, Environmental Humanities, and Humane Tech. These new initiatives, like those before them, bring vital attention to the human, and we celebrate initiatives, like those before us, that uniquely empower to answer: how can we best ensure and safeguard the ongoing well-being of individuals, communities and our democratic institutions? We eagerly anticipate next year when the IHR will welcome a new director. Elizabeth will take on a new role as Director of the Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics, and Ron, serving as Associate Director and joined by Assistant Director Liz Grumbach, will ensure a smooth leadership transition in the IHR. We thank all of our constituencies — faculty, students, staff, administration, our donors and community members — for your support this past year and look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Elizabeth Langland, Director, IHR
Ron Broglio, Co-Director, IHR

The Digital Humanities initiative at the IHR is a feminist, anti-racist and inclusive space. The Desert Humanities initiative intersects our barren home in the desert with the humanities issues that arise in such a harsh environment.

Environmental Humanities
The environmental humanities explore how art, history, literature, philosophy and other humanities topics serve as entry points to discussions about the relationships between people, place and planet.

Health Humanities
The Health Humanities initiative seeks to transcend disciplinary and institutional boundaries by bringing academics, clinicians, caregivers and students together to address grand social challenges in areas of health and healthcare.

Humane Tech
The Humane Tech initiative brings together tech leaders, entrepreneurs, investors and humanists to co-create the frameworks, tools and skill sets they need to overcome the potentially dehumanizing effects of new technologies.

Digital Humanities
Digital humanities work is interdisciplinary and creative. It weaves new media tools and data and computational sciences with humanities methods, primary materials and theoretical frames to address the challenges of current digital cultures. The Digital Humanities initiative at the IHR is a feminist, anti-racist and inclusive space.

Desert Humanities
Deserts are demanding and pose large questions to us — questions that invite large ecological challenges of current digital cultures. The Desert Humanities initiative intersects our barren home in the desert with the humanities issues that arise in such a harsh environment.
The fellows program provides funding for faculty to commit to a year of intensive research and work together to meaningfully present their work to the community.

What functions do borders and boundaries serve? Who makes and guards them? Who confronts and crosses them? Fellows studied different regions and peoples around the world to find answers to these questions inspired by the year’s fellowship theme, “Borders and Boundaries.”

Vanessa Fonseca-Chávez
Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication
Fonseca-Chávez’s project engages community histories in eastern Arizona and western New Mexico by examining how long-standing Spanish- and Mexican-origin communities created and preserved their “querencia,” a love or attachment to place rooted in landscape, on both sides of Arizona-New Mexico territorial and state borders.

Calvin Schermerhorn
Professor, School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies (SHPRS)
Schermerhorn’s project is a narrative history of economic inequality, which shows how barriers to Black income and wealth creation formed in the colonial era and transformed over 450 years as a bundle of disadvantages relative to white Americans.

Anna Cichopek-Gajraj
Associate Professor, SHPRS
Cichopek-Gajraj’s book project examines the postwar displacement of Polish Catholics and Polish Jews. It traces their journeys out of Poland through Africa, Europe and Latin America in the first 15 years after World War II.

Laurie Manchester
Associate Professor, SHPRS
In 1954, 100,000 Russians from pious, monarchist families voluntarily repatriated to the Soviet Union. Manchester’s research challenges the dominant theories that economic betterment, the desire to live where individual freedom is protected and family reunification were the dominant motivations for migration.

Miriam Mara
Associate Professor, School of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies
Ireland’s geographical status and national boundaries have profound effects on the ways agricultural guidelines change the land and its use. Mara’s project examines Irish agricultural practices and farming policy alongside contemporary literary texts that depict Irish farming practices.

William Hedberg
Assistant Professor, School of International Letters and Cultures
Hedberg’s project centers on the literary representation of “utopia” in early modern and modern East Asian literature. His research pertains to a growing body of scholarship devoted to previously overlooked connections between the literary corpuses of China, Japan and the West.
seed grants

The IHR seed grant program empowers the ASU community to imagine, innovate and create humanities research that reveals new ways of understanding the past and future.

Spring 2019 Seed Grant Recipients

Biography of a Sound — Prince, Place and the Hidden History of the Minneapolis Sound
Rashad Shabazz, Associate Professor, School of Social Transformation; Sabine Feisst, Evelyn Smith Professor, School of Music.

Power, Society and the Senses: A Workshop
Toby Harper, Assistant Professor, School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies; Richard Newhauser, Professor, Department of English.

Storytelling on Location: Emerging Modalities of Place-Based Writing
Jacob Greene, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

Who Wrote the Autobiography of Malcolm X
Keith Miller, Professor, Department of English.

Fall 2019 Seed Grant Recipients

Bodies in Revolt: The Volatile Politics of Women’s Body Hair
Breanne Fahs, Professor, School of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies.

Monumental Objections: The Phoenix Indian School at Steele Indian School Park
Kathleen Lamp, Associate Professor, Department of English.

No Longer Just ‘Hyphenated’: The New ‘American’ Conversation
Pardis Mahdavi, Dean of Social Sciences, The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Lois Brown, Director, Center for the Study of Race and Democracy.

book award

The IHR Book Award celebrates outstanding writers whose contributions to the humanities change the conversation by fostering new directions for their discipline.

Winner

“Porous Borders: Multiracial Migrations and the Law in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands,” by Julian Lim

Honorable Mention


The IHR offers grant support to The College’s Division of Humanities at ASU as well as IHR internal funding recipients.*

2.8M dollars in external funding was awarded

43 project proposals were submitted

56 faculty participated in sponsored projects in collaboration with the Division of Humanities

*External funding is measured over an 18-month project period (Jan. 1, 2019-Jun. 30, 2020).
Opening Reception for Dust and Shadow: An Acoustic Ecology Salon

Maja Kuzmanovic and Nik Gaffney of FoAM traveled the desert in two years of site visits with ASU’s D.A.R.E. team collecting artifacts and sounds. From these experiences, they created a desert sounds vinyl album and series of accompanying images, which were displayed at the Acoustic Ecology Salon at the Hayden Library. Additional books, maps and images were supplied by the Hayden Library and its archives.

This public reception (hosted by the Desert Humanities initiative and co-sponsored by the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability, the Center for Philosophical Technologies and the Synthesis Center) gave attendees the opportunity to be immersed in a desert experience.

Writing Studios for Faculty and Graduate Students

Throughout the academic year, Chris Jones, director of graduate studies and associate professor of history at SHPRS, hosted six-week writing studios. He held two workshops for faculty and two workshops for graduate students. Faculty workshop participants discussed topics such as setting themselves up for success, avoiding negative self-talk and practicing habits that make it easier to keep writing on a regular basis. Topics for the graduate student studios included breaking large writing projects into manageable pieces and writing while researching.

The New Gay for Pay’ Lightning Talks and Workshop with Julia Himberg

On November 14, Julia Himberg, director and associate professor of Film and Media Studies at ASU, led a workshop for individuals interested in social change, advocacy and activism to talk to each other about how to get out of the academic “comfort zone” and make their work accessible to a public audience. Guests had the option to present their own three-minute lightning talks on their topic of research in relation to social change, advocacy and activism. Together, the talks and following table discussions bridged the gap between academic research and how to inform the public about that research.

Adaptation, Resiliency and Care: A Series

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the IHR launched the Adaptation, Resiliency and Care series. In this broader time of uncertainty, this continuing series seeks to provide conversations and resources to create a community of mutual support. Series event topics have included teaching online, conducting research and offering support to students, as well as new challenges for parenting and building community during a pandemic.

Geologies of Race, with Distinguished Lecturer Kathryn Yusoff

How are geology and race connected? At this public lecture on February 27, IHR 2020 Distinguished Lecturer Kathryn Yusoff invited guests to discover the connection between the human impact on geology and the inhuman outcomes of colonialism. A major university and community event, the annual Distinguished Lecturer program brings to campus a prominent humanities scholar whose work highlights the importance of humanities research.
looking forward

The 2020-21 academic year holds new challenges and possibilities. To meet the demands of the times, we are creating responsive programming.

Look for our new Black Ecologies initiative. Attend programming on Adaptation, Resilience and Care. Tune in and participate in our Scholarly Series on Hope and Empowerment.

Meet our innovative postdoctoral scholar in residence, Nnamdi Igbokwe, who is working on public policy and globalism. Join conversations with our 2020 Book Award winner Juan Du and honorable mention recipient Francine Banner. Hear from our 2021 Distinguished Lecturer, adrienne maree brown.

In the year ahead, we hope you will engage with us in creating new ideas for the humanities at ASU and in our community.

Apply for funding at ihr.asu.edu/funding.

Get involved with our initiatives at ihr.asu.edu/initiatives.

Register for upcoming events at ihr.asu.edu/events.