

Humanities Center Seeking Faculty Fellows for 2021-2022

Fearing the Unknown: Irrationality, Anti-Politics, and Conspiracy Theories

The Humanities Center of the University of Hartford requests applications from faculty interested in becoming one of the distinguished Faculty Fellows of the Humanities Center for the 2021-2022 academic year, by offering a lecture focused on their own project related to the seminar topic of “Fearing the Unknown” during the **Spring 2022 Humanities Lecture Series**.

Dr. Marco Cupolo, Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies, will lead the Humanities Center Seminar for this next year. Dr. Cupolo has selected the theme “Fearing the Unknown: Irrationality, Anti-Politics, and Conspiracy Theories” for the lecture series. Here is a description of the seminar:

Transitions to modern societies require changes and innovations that often have a short term, negative impact on communities; it is commonly assumed as the inevitable, initial cost to start development and progress. A similar but less destructive dynamic distinguishes the impetus of modern societies in pursuing permanent development and progress. Changes and innovations, however, may also end by destabilizing communities as well modern societies. The coincidence of revolutionary, technological innovations with fast social changes, above all, can disrupt individuals’ lives and behavior patterns; it may even stir unpredictable, violent reactions against whatever is imagined or intentionally peddled as a threat. Surges of irrational, individual or collective rage then can challenge the legitimacy of modern democratic institutions and deny the peaceful coexistence of different beliefs and values. In some cases, poorly educated individuals react to changes with nostalgia for an imaginary if not mythical past, when everything was supposedly better for everybody. We see similar attitudes among certain individuals today, and they often are victims or supporters of aggressive, well-orchestrated misinformation campaigns launched through social media.

This growing social and political trend relies just on individuals’ fear and rejection of the unknown and on individuals who cannot understand the complexities of a transitional stage and instinctively reject such complexities. Modern thinking and democracy instead postulate exactly opposite principles for social progress that require rational knowledge and critical interpretation of any phenomena. This seminar introduces elements of classic, political and sociological theories and philosophy to understand today’s debates on political irrationality.

Possible disciplinary overlaps include (but are certainly *not* limited to): Visual culture; literature and the arts; historiography; cinema; pop culture (graphic novels, comic books, television); philosophy, psychology; sociology.

The advantages and responsibilities of being a Faculty Fellow include the following:

- Faculty Fellows will be working on a scholarly or pedagogical project in a context that will offer encouragement and a testing site for the development of their ideas. The Humanities Center expects that the project will lay the groundwork for a future publication or equivalent dissemination of scholarship or artistic product.
- Each Faculty Fellow will give a talk as part of the Spring 2022 series of lectures associated with the theme. The lecture will give each Fellow an opportunity to present the results of their research on the project.
- Fellows receive a stipend of \$1,500 to enable them to read, write, do research, and prepare their spring lecture.
- Faculty Fellows are encouraged to participate in the honors course in the fall term and are expected to attend the Tuesday evening talks by other Fellows during the Spring lecture series.

All full-time faculty interested in becoming a Faculty Fellow of the Humanities Center for the 2021-2022 academic year, please email a one-page proposal that describes the focus of your interest as it is related to the course topic, "Fearing the Unknown," and the material to be addressed in your spring talk, along with a CV, to Bryan Sinche (sinche@hartford.edu) and Marco Cupolo (cupolo@hartford.edu) **no later than Friday, April 9, 2021.**

The Humanities Center at the University of Hartford supports interdisciplinary scholarship focusing on the humanities through arts, sciences, technology, media, music, psychology, history, film, philosophy and literature. **For more information, contact Bryan Sinche, director, at sinche@hartford.edu.**