HUMANITIES CENTER

Student Research Assistants

“Working with Anna provided the rewarding experience of challenging well-established claims, and combining ideas to generate an original piece of research.”

Introducing Students to the Practice of Humanities Research

SRAs are the centerpiece of the Humanities Center’s commitment to engaging students in the practice of humanistic research.

“I particularly enjoyed spending time thinking about power structures and dynamics in the context of American government and society.”
2015 Student Research Assistants*

Jillian Banner  
Lindsay Brandt  
Camille Braun  
Alexandra Chang  
Mara Daly  
Graham Earley  
Maureen Kalkowski-Farrand  
Abha Laddha  
Laura Levitt  
Aaron Sala  
Noah Scheer  
Tyler Spaeth  
JordiKai Watanabe-Inouye  
Florence Wong

*Awards are made possible by generous gifts from Alison von Klemperer ’82 and an anonymous parent donor.
Introduction

Student Research Assistantships are the centerpiece of the Humanities Center’s commitment to engaging students in the practice of humanistic research. Through this program, the Humanities Center has been able to fund close to a hundred students since its inception in 2009. Faculty members involve students in substantive areas of their research during the winter or summer breaks.

Student Research Assistants (SRAs) gain valuable experience that enhances their academic life at Carleton and prepares them for both careers and graduate school, while professors regularly comment on the substantial boost these students give to their research. The students read and edit scholarly work, and establish bibliographic materials as part of the process of traditional research in the humanities. They also work with digital humanities tools to construct visual archives, build websites, and conduct internet surveys, which are essential new methods for scholars involved in the humanities.

In the summer of 2013, the Humanities Center received a generous gift from Alison von Klemperer ’82, in honor of Professor Diethelm Prowe. Her continuous support for the program, as well as that of another anonymous donor, has allowed us to implement a truly comprehensive undergraduate research-training program in the Humanities. The student researchers featured in this pamphlet worked closely and collaboratively with faculty members from the departments of Cinema and Media Studies, History, Music, Sociology and Anthropology, Philosophy, Religion, Spanish, and Studio Art. In the past six years, the Humanities Center has funded SRAs for faculty from eighteen different departments.

“[SRAs] gain valuable experience that enhances their academic life at Carleton and prepares them for both careers and graduate school…”

Silvia L. López
Director of the Humanities Center
Before the New Poor Law of 1834, workhouses were institutions established to relieve poverty in 18th century England by providing accommodation and work for the impoverished, infirmed, elderly, and disabled. Our Virtual Workhouse project examines historic architecture and furniture, while drawing from archival documents to re-create a digital version of the atmosphere and experience of an 18th century workhouse. We create 3-D architectural and object models with Google SketchUp and Blender respectively, and use Unity to combine the virtual models into a walkthrough experience.

Workhouse perceptions vary widely. Optimists believe that Britain's system of poor relief saved thousands of lives from starvation, providing an acceptable lifestyle for those who would otherwise not survive. Yet others define workhouse life through hopeless living conditions, dire medical provisions, and horrible treatment, with strict rules and regulation limiting everyday freedom. Both perspectives are likely true, but situations and experiences largely depend on the particular workhouse in question. Workhouses were part of a larger system of institutionalization that English poor relief embraced in this era. A similar type of institution was the London Foundling Hospital. Desperate family members dropped their children off at the Foundling Hospital with a recognizable token, in hopes of reclaiming children when they were in better circumstances. We discovered boxes of these tokens at the London Metropolitan Archives.

On our research trip to England, Professor Susannah Ottaway, Graham Earley ’17 and I visited various locations that offered information on workhouse experience and surroundings: museums and archives, as well as former workhouse buildings currently re-purposed for other uses. We photographed documents and historic sites for references and textures for our virtual workhouse modeling, and documented archival sources in preparation for a class in the winter taught by Professor Susannah Ottaway and Austin Mason. Through this process, we created a system for efficient data procurement and management, using Excel and Omeka.net to store and share our large collection of data and images.
Our research focused on the issue of collective self-awareness. Collective self-awareness is a topic in the philosophy of mind, drawing on philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, and cognitive science to address questions of consciousness and subjectivity. Anna and I began by reading the general literature on the topic, before narrowing down our focus to cases of disagreement between subjects. Disagreement posed a particularly interesting case since it seems that when two parties disagree, they can no longer be experiencing a moment as a collective subject. However, as we discovered, there are several situations in which disagreement plays a constitutive part of a collective experience, to the extent that collective self-awareness is not lost during the disagreement. We explored accounts of representational theory, theories of consciousness, and specific cases of collective disagreement to support our claim.

By looking at specific examples of collective experiences, as well as drawing on the findings of psychology and neuroscience, Anna and I were able to see the crossovers between these disciplines and philosophy. One of our most interesting discoveries was the role common ground between parties played in facilitating their collective experiences, even in cases of disagreement. Paul Grice was one of the first to highlight the importance of common ground between participants in conversation, arguing that it was these common presuppositions that allowed conversation to proceed smoothly. Anna and I found that the same applies to collective experiences. The facility of the collective experience depended on the past experiences of the individuals and their relationship with each other.

Through our research this summer, I gained the ability to read papers in disciplines thus far unfamiliar to me, such as psychology and neuroscience, as well as see the connection between their findings and the arguments being made in philosophy. Working with Anna provided the rewarding experience of challenging well-established claims, and combining ideas to generate an original piece of research. The best moments of our collaboration occurred during our lively discussions at Tandem, when we excitedly picked our way through the readings and shared our own ideas and speculations. As Anna attended a workshop to present her paper, I am looking forward to hearing about the next step in the research process, which will be to incorporate her colleagues’ feedback.
I have been working with music professor Melinda Russell to help further her long-term research on the emergence of the folk music revival movement in Minneapolis and St. Paul in the 1950s and 1960s. My efforts have included investigating and documenting the emergence of folk music in a mainstream Minneapolis newspaper (*The Minneapolis Tribune*) by tracking concert advertisements, features, want ads, critic reviews, and venue information, specifically in 1962. Since I have been searching for and gathering any and all content relevant to Melinda’s larger research inquiries, my role in the project over the summer has not been operating under a specific thesis.

As I made my way through most issues of *The Minneapolis Tribune* from 1962, I became well acquainted with the layout of each day’s paper, developing a better sense of where in the papers I would likely find relevant articles or advertisements for music venues such as the Padded Cell, or “The Twin Cities’ Only Folk Music Room”. One of the most provocative and reliably relevant sections of the paper was a daily column called “After Last Night,” written by local theater, music, and culture commentator, Will Jones. Jones’ columns are helpful to Melinda’s research because they provide both witty anecdotal and concrete evidence of folk concerts, changes venues, and the availability of folk in the Twin Cities.

Throughout this research position, I became increasingly more efficient at scanning through archival newspaper data and also learned the technical skills of setting up a microfilm reader. I was also responsible for formatting, saving, and organizing all images in a large database, which both Melinda and I can access and discuss. Most of my work this summer was conducted independently, though Melinda and I would converse quite regularly via email and telephone. One of the most exciting findings of the summer’s research (that then spurred further questions) occurred when I discovered there was a strike at *The Minneapolis Tribune* from April through August of 1962. When I noticed this unexpected gap in the archive, and Melinda advised me to simply continue looking at the papers from after the strike had finished, I found that there didn’t appear to be any advertisements for The Padded Cell in the locations they’d been printed before the strike in April. Additionally, Will Jones appeared to be writing less about The Padded Cell and folk generally after the strike. This leads us to the conclusion that something significant changed with this venue between April and August in 1962, and indicates that turning to other news sources during this time period might be helpful to further investigate what happened to The Padded Cell.
The jeremiad is a religio-political speech format that has persisted in American socio-political discourse as popular figures have taken on the roles of prophets, construing America’s history as offensive, standing against it, and warning their audiences to change their behavior by modeling it after their nation’s founding principles. The question that this research explores is whether the jeremiad can inspire change that corrects racial inequality. My analysis argues that relying on the jeremiad is not the best method for inspiring socio-political change because it glorifies America’s past by highlighting the idealistic principles coined by its founders (i.e. “all men are created equal,”) but fails to recognize that the nation itself was not actually built on those principles, but rather on practices that directly contradict them (i.e. slavery). I suggest instead that people who find themselves in positions of power should use their soapboxes to suggest specific actions to take in the future in pursuing a more egalitarian society.

I particularly enjoyed spending time thinking about power structures and dynamics in the context of American government and society. One of the most challenging questions that I faced was how people who are not in power should adopt strategies and discourses of the powerful – what Audre Lorde calls the master’s tools - without strengthening the existing power structures that harm their livelihoods. If we examine American society today, we see that African Americans are often discriminated against in their attempts to educate themselves and find fulfilling and financially supportive careers. However, in order for them to educate themselves and obtain the careers that they want, they must adopt the practices set in place by existing racist powers. By doing so, they also strengthen those structures and potentially make it more difficult for themselves to express their culture and thrive as Americans. If Americans wish to work towards creating a truly egalitarian society, they must immediately seek a fair answer to this question.

Never having taken a religion class at Carleton, I spent a significant portion of my time on the project learning to appreciate the skills required of students of religion. Since religion research requires investigation into social phenomena, I learned more about African American religious practices and how they are situated in American society. One of my favorite parts of research was getting to discuss my thoughts frankly with the professor with whom I worked, Kevin Wolfe. Talking to him and writing ideas has helped with my ability to analyze theory and effectively communicate my own ideas.

---

1This definition of prophecy comes from George Shulman’s “American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture.”
This is a project to create a website called “Artivism in the 21st Century.” It is an open archive (freely accessible and without charge), updated and expanding continuously. There are three objectives: 1) to offer independent artists a free space and up-to-date bibliography, where others can get to know their work; 2) to allow professors, students, researchers, and the general public the opportunity to learn about projects and activities that, for political reasons, are not usually discussed; and 3) for the website to become part of the Spanish cultural sphere, pointing out how politics influences and limits this sphere.

I began work on this project in the spring. Palmar and I communicated through email. She would write to me with people to research and information to include. It is a bilingual Spanish/English website. I translated, mostly from Spanish into English. It was difficult and slow at first, but as summer went on, I got quicker, which was exciting. I learned how to filter information online, as well as how to best to organize it for the website. Before working with Palmar, I had little experience in these areas. I now have the confidence to do even more.
This summer I worked with Cecilia Cornejo on her film, a documentary about skateboarders trying to get a skatepark built in Northfield. I did research in the Northfield Historical Society, looking at the *Northfield News* archives for articles about the skatepark. I also selected and color-corrected still images, in order to transform the information into a more cinematic format. For example, I went through footage of city council meetings, selecting stills and looking for ways to make footage of monotonous meetings more visually striking.

What I found most interesting was seeing the way Cecilia structured the story of her film. I learned a lot about the process of doing research for a documentary, and how much time and thought go into conveying information in a way that makes people want to watch.

In terms of new skills, I got a lot more familiar with Premiere and After Effects. I learned more about color correction, which I think will be really useful for me in the future. I also got to attend the Adobe Creative Cloud workshop, where I learned a lot about animating text. One particular experience that stands out to me was learning how to rotoscope, and how rotoscoping can be combined with text animation in After Effects to create really interesting title sequences.
Mediterranean Rivers: Chained and Unchained

Tyler Spaeth '16 with Professor Victoria Morse

In the exhibit "Mediterranean Rivers: Chained and Unchained," we explored the variety of ways a person could think about and visualize rivers. Our project examined a wide range of sources to answer this question; engineering texts demonstrated how the river could be exploited to do important work, while astronomers mapped metaphorical rivers onto the sky. In the end, we concluded that rivers prompted responses of fascination, appreciation, and terror. Communities – both in 16th century Italy and Northfield today – have always sought to understand, visualize, and "chain" rivers for their own practical and cultural ends.

As I dove into the research, I was surprised how connected many of the books were to one another. For example, Carleton’s special collections owns a facsimile of the "Chain Map," a late 16th century city view of Florence and the Arno River. Since maps were expensive to design from scratch in this period, the “Chain Map” was copied and incorporated into a variety of books, including one of the other books we are showing in the exhibit. Drawing these connections helped me understand how knowledge was reproduced and distributed in Early Modern Europe.

This summer gave me a valuable glimpse into the promises and difficulties of public history. On the academic side, I did hours of research and then had to choose which story I wanted to tell in roughly 100 words. On the practical side, I sat in on and contributed to meetings with the curator of the exhibit, Laurel Brady, who contacted the lending libraries and did much of the “behind the scenes” work that went into the exhibit. This experience has taught me how to write clearly and concisely, and made me appreciate the immense value of public history.
Friends of Prairie Creek Project

Florence Wong ‘16 with Professor Kimberly Smith

In Spring 2015, students from Professor Kimberly Smith’s ENTS 110 class conducted various research projects on Prairie Creek, a 460-acre Wildlife Management Area managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources near Dennison, Minnesota. Prairie Creek’s website, Friends of Prairie Creek, is currently a Google site maintained by former landowner Craig Koester. As a SRA, I combined my interests in web design and environmental awareness to evaluate and re-design an entirely new website for Friends of Prairie Creek. I reassembled the website’s organizational structure and content while integrating student project findings, in hopes of creating the most user-friendly web experience possible.

Re-creating Friends of Prairie Creek gave me the opportunity to learn about various aspects of the prairie, including its geological and land ownership history and restoration processes for the prairie and savanna. Before its designation as a Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Prairie Creek had undergone many changes with its land use – from dairy farming to cattle grazing, and eventually to restoration and preservation. Having grown up on the land, Craig Koester opted for an alternative future for the land rather than a marketable commodity, thus transformed it into a WMA. What’s truly inspiring is his understanding and appreciation for the interconnectedness of life on the land, a mindset we must learn to apply to everyday life.

Under the guidance of Professor Kim Smith, I re-designed the Friends of Prairie Creek website using web platform Wix, making decisions on not only the visual aspects of web design, but the larger organizational structure and content of the user interface and experience. Meeting with Craig Koester allowed us to understand and evaluate the website’s objectives and audience. Beyond exploring self-directed work and gaining skills in web interface design and understanding client needs, I also gained a fuller knowledge and appreciation for the rich history and life on the prairie.
As part of The Religious Diversity in Minnesota Initiative, this project helps provide publicly accessible web-based and local resources about religious diversity in Minnesota to help foster nuanced and informed public conversation about and across religious difference. The aim has been to bring a handful of course-generated case studies to public display readiness to showcase broader possibilities of the project. Rather than keep the rich knowledge and wealth of research within the confines of the academy, this project seeks to help Minnesota communities access scholarly resources for public good.

This summer I learned about Somali Muslim, Sudanese Lutheran, and urban and suburban Hindu communities in Minnesota. I also learned about the communities involved with two Native American sacred sites in Minnesota: Pilot Knob, an urban site in Dakota County, and Pipestone National Monument in Pipestone, MN. I especially enjoyed learning about the ways in which religious economics practices intersect with ostensibly secular realms of life, such as education, and community building.

I gained a variety of skills this summer, because my project required working on many different parts of website building. I learned about both content and copy editing for public, web-based readership. I also learned a lot about copyright law and learned a few good tricks for finding public domain images and documents. Lastly, I learned how to use an academic website building site called Omeka and even learned how to enter some code. Together, this all helped me realize which parts of the process I enjoy and would like to focus more energy on in the future.
Automata in the Holy Roman Empire

Noah Scheer ’18 with Professor Jessica Keating

My work this summer was focused on Professor Jessica Keating’s book manuscript, *All Wound Up: Automata, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Early Modern World*. Automata, clockwork figures often made from expensive materials, have been consistently understood by scholarship as purely decorative objects that were intended to delight a courtly audience. By examining the objects’ imagery, movement, and the political or religious opinions of the rulers who owned and commissioned them, the book argues instead that they reflect the larger religious and political issue that the Holy Roman Empire faced during the early modern period. These issues include the demise of the notion of a universal Christian monarchy, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the encroachment of the Ottoman Empire, and global trade.

My work consisted of editing the book manuscript and preparing its bibliography and endnotes. In the process, I read the original dissertation that the book was based on and compared it with the book manuscript. It was interesting to see how the arguments progressed from one work to the other and how arguments were elaborated on, added, or removed in the final version.

In the process of reading the book manuscript, I learned a good deal about sixteenth-century German automata, as well as the Holy Roman Empire and its politics at the period. But aside from this historical knowledge, the work gave me other practical skills. My work organizing the bibliography helped me solidify my ability to cite works easily in their correct formats. In addition, by editing a large piece of academic writing, I improved my ability to evaluate the arguments in this type of work and give my opinion on it.
Critical Encounters with the Ottomans: George of Hungary’s *Treatise on the Customs, Conditions, Iniquity and Increase of the Turks*

*Lindsay Brandt ’17 with Professor William North*

For this project, I worked on the first sustained account of the Ottoman Turks as a people and polity written in the West. Written in the 1480s by a man known as George of Hungary, who had lived as a servant under Ottoman rule for two decades, the *Treatise on the Customs, Conditions, Iniquity and Increase of the Turks* became an influential account both for its depiction of the power and expansionist ambitions of the Ottomans, but also for its praise of many of their customs and piety.

The *Treatise* had been translated from Latin to English by William North & two previous Humanities Research Fellows (Emma Burd ‘15 and William Schedl ‘14), but it was in a rough condition. My job was to work through the translation and bring it closer to a publishable state, noting places where footnotes were needed, cleaning up wording, and making sure that it read clearly. I also researched the context and contents of the *Treatise* and worked on crafting an outline for a potential introduction to the translation.

While I wasn’t the one translating, it was really interesting to work directly with a primary source that hasn’t been published in English before, and I learned a lot about how the primary sources we read in classes are actually produced. The process of creating a translation is an interesting experience in finding a happy medium between staying completely true to the wording of the translation (as well as trying to figure out exactly what the original text is trying to convey) and actually making it readable, understandable, and clear to a wider audience who doesn’t know the original language.
The Humanities Center expands the ways faculty members and students experience the humanities at Carleton by enhancing interdisciplinary exchange and providing opportunities for humanistic practice through research. “We’re giving students invaluable experience and an edge on their résumés, an advantage that Carleton students in the sciences have enjoyed for years,” says the founding director of the Humanities Center, Cathy Yandell, W.I. and Hulda F. Daniell Professor of French Literature, Language and Culture.
Carleton depends upon the support of donors like you to keep the Humanities Center and its innovations going strong for years to come. Learn more at apps.carleton.edu/humanities.

To discuss a gift in support of the humanities, please contact a development officer at 800-492-2275.