

# College of Humanities and Social Sciences AY21-22 Interdisciplinary Groups Executive Summary

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The CHSS Interdisciplinary Groups were designed to promote a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration at Montclair State University. This initiative had a very successful introduction for the academic year 2021-2022 with sixteen groups. Group membership included fifteen CHSS academic departments, along with collaborations from CEHS, CART, and CELS faculty. Other non-faculty members included staff from Health Promotion, the Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health, CAPS, and the Global Center on Human Trafficking. Objectives amongst the groups included curriculum development, student involvement, educational awareness, and furthering research. Efforts of the groups, just to name a few, included highlighting cognitive sciences at MSU, furthering the development of URHS 101 (Introduction to Urban Humanities) course as well as an undergraduate major in Digital Humanities, research in medieval, early modern, and interdisciplinary studies, addressing social justice in the field of public education, and creating a task force to promote accessible media at MSU. Group activities included lectures, workshops, surveys, working groups, and roundtable discussions. Each of the sixteen groups proved to have made significant progress towards their individual objectives whether it was receiving an abundance of positive feedback, high attendance rates, or attaining valuable information towards their research.*

## Montclair Medieval and Early Modern Seminar

The members of this group included Alison Beringer (Classics and General Humanities), Elizabeth Emery (World Languages and Cultures), Raul Galoppe (Spanish and Latino Studies), Minji Lee (Religion and Medical Humanities), Kathleen Loysen (World Languages and Cultures), Jeffrey Miller (English), Megan Moran (History), Meghan Robison (Philosophy), and Adam Rzepka (English).

Montclair Medieval and Early Modern Studies Seminar (MEMS), which has successfully been active for eight years and generally aims for two speakers per semester, had two speakers during Spring 2022. In April, they hosted their keynote speaker for the year, David Sterling Brown of Binghamton University and The Racial Imaginary Institute (TRII), for a lecture and discussion focused on performance issues in Othello, titled “Just Us: An Early Modern Critical Race Studies Conversation.” Then, in May, Francesco Toto of University Roma Tre gave a talk on “Rousseau and Revolution.” Attendance at these and other past MEMS events has been successful. They consistently draw an audience of MSU faculty, regional scholars, graduate students, and undergraduates.

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## Montclair Public Forum

The members of this group included Benjamin Nienass (Political Science and Law), Meghan Robison (Philosophy), and Stephen Ruszczyk (Sociology); along with collaborations from CEHS faculty including Blanca Elizabeth Vega, Tanya Maloney, Rachel Garver, and Elizabeth Rivera Rodas.

The Montclair Public Forum was a series of three public-facing roundtable discussions addressing pressing issues related to social justice in the field of public education and higher education. The first event examined the relationship between undocumented college students and universities. Each presenter described undocumented student challenges, campaigns to strengthen college access and persistence, and identified strategies to advance inclusion of undocumented students. The second event addressed the highly contested debate about critical race theory in public school classrooms. A team of researchers from UCLA presented a report on the organized efforts to discredit anti-racist curriculum across the United States, while the director of New Jersey's Amistad Commission and two public school teachers from the Princeton school district presented the challenges of providing an honest reckoning with US history in public schools. The third and final event focused on integration, asking *what is the value of integration for education?* The panel brought together voices of faculty from MSU and Boston University who have examined the issue in an academic book, and educational activists working in the area including a member of the Newark Board of Education as well as The Latino Action Network Foundation. Overall all three events were well attended and received positive feedback from the audience.

## Cultural Heritage

The members of this group included Deborah Chatr Aryamontri (Classics and General Humanities), Dawn Hayes (History), Greg Pope (Earth and Environmental Studies), Timothy Renner (Classics and General Humanities), Peter Siegel (Anthropology), and Danlin Yu (Earth and Environmental Studies).

The objective of the group - in which they successfully achieved on April 28th-29th, 2022 - was to organize a two-day public event on cultural heritage to foster awareness of threats to natural and cultural resources in the absence of appropriate management and educational plans, as well as to highlight shifts in theoretical methods and to promote novel socio-cultural approaches involving greater public engagement in the narration of past and present cultures. The conference topics were based on the existing pillars of inquiry and discussion with which the group had been working on: stewardship, preservation, and social role of cultural heritage, especially as seen in MSU field projects and other investigations in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean, and was led by several non-U.S. archaeologists, Italian antiquities authority professionals, and cultural heritage practitioners based in the Caribbean. Given the success of this first conference, the group looks forward to continuing their initiative with follow-up

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symposia and/or a series of lectures/roundtables on cultural heritage within the framework of an academic year.

## **Language Revitalization Professional Development Workshop Series**

The members of this group included Maisa Taha (Anthropology), Jonathan Howell (Linguistics), and Marisa Trubiano (World Languages & Cultures).

Their research efforts were focused on Indigenous language diversity and revitalization, as a Native American & Indigenous Studies (NAIS) minor, focusing on Indigenous peoples, is on the horizon at Montclair State University. Their project had two main objectives: the first was to build participating faculty's working knowledge of the challenges and opportunities involved in building the university's capacity in language revitalization; and the second was to nurture professional and community connections that will inform recommendations regarding future programming and curriculum in this area. To meet the aforementioned objectives the team organized a series of two-hour conversations/workshops with experts in language revitalization and reclamation. Their efforts proved to be of great value as they were able to secure a \$2500 course development fellowship from the Digital Ethnic Futures Consortium, an NEH/Mellon backed group (Jan.-Sept. 2022), create a new course titled Indigenous Languages and Lifeways, which will be taught under the umbrella of ANTH 102 (Linguistic Anthropology) in Spring 2023 and submitted for approval as a new cross-listed course for the NAIS minor moving forward, and formed connections with Indigenous leaders and scholars.

## **Engaging the MSU Community in Exploring the Connections Between Language, Disability Studies, and Youth Development by Highlighting Related Career Paths**

The members of this group included Lesley Sylvan (Communication Sciences and Disorders), Maisa Taha (Anthropology) Elsa Davidson (Anthropology), Milton Fuentes, ( Psychology), Lauren Covey (Linguistics), Marisa Trubiano (World Languages and Cultures), Jess Bacon (Teaching and Learning), and Sara Goldstein (Family Science and Human Development).

The research purpose of this group focused on 3 areas: first, to support faculty in exploring topics related to language, disability studies and youth development; second, to demonstrate for students and the wider campus how issues around language use/competency, disability and youth development are interrelated and can manifest themselves in a variety of career pathways; and third, to propose innovative curricular and extracurricular programming for students to pursue undergraduate and graduate training, as well as professional employment, by focusing on the synergy among these areas. The group held two retreats during AY21-22 in which they identified opportunities for interdisciplinary curricular innovation by discussing potential opportunities for cross-listing and/or team teaching courses, as well as brainstormed

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ideas for scholarly outcomes (e.g. conference proposals) that highlight connections among their disciplines, particularly with a focus on addressing the challenges of helping students make connections between their interests in these topics and concrete career paths. The group also organized a speaker series with three panel presentations. The first panel centered on choosing a major, the second on navigating graduate school, and the third on selecting a career path. All guest speakers were either current MSU students or successful alumni. The group received an abundant amount of positive feedback from the panel series, thus enforcing their interests and the importance of making such connections clearer both to faculty and students on the existing strengths of the university in preparing students for work related to the topic of language, disability studies and youth development.

## **Native American and Indigenous Studies Program Curriculum Development and Research Center Roundtables**

The members of this group included Mark Clatterbuck (Religion), Elspeth Martini (History), and Chris Matthews (Anthropology).

The group hosted two roundtable meetings during Spring 2022 to further efforts in developing a new program and center in Native American and Indigenous Studies (NIAS) at Montclair State University. The first roundtable focused on ways to develop a student-centered academic program and a community-centered Native American research agenda. The two main takeaways from the roundtable were that (1) we have done a relatively good job in developing the program so far, especially in our ongoing engagements with NJ's tribal groups; and (2) that we be sure to recognize the complexities of Native identity and politics in contemporary society. The second roundtable focused on teaching goals and course development for the NAIS program, as well as opportunities for community engagement. The roundtables proved to be valuable as they allowed the group to engage with NAIS scholars and MSU colleagues about the new NAIS program in terms of course and program content, promotion, community partners, and goals for students after graduation.

## **Plan and Propose a Interdisciplinary UG Major in Digital Humanities and a Grad. Cert. Prog. in Digital Public Humanities**

The members of this group included Deborah Chatr Aryamontri (Classics and General Humanities), Senta German (Classics and General Humanities), Glen Gill (Classics and General Humanities), Prudence Jones (Classics and General Humanities), Vickie Larson (Classics and General Humanities), Constantine Coutras (Computer Science), Esperanza Brizuela-Garcia (History), A.J. Kelton (CHSS Digital Media CoLab), Siobhan McCarthy (Sprague Library), Ashuwin Vaidya (Mathematics - later replaced by Steven Greenstein); Veronica Furman (Campus Recruiter), Infosys, and Montclair State University alum [2014], Humanities.

The group met in 1.5-2.00 hour sessions on four occasions via Zoom during the Spring 2022 semester. Distributed for discussion before the first meeting was the book *Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), as well as a list of goals for the group's work in Spring 2022 which included: taking stock of all intellectual, curricular and institutional

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resources already existing at MSU which could contribute to a Digital Humanities program; researching Digital Humanities and Public Digital Humanities course offerings and curricular structures at peer institutions across the country; heeding advice and best practice models from regional and peer institutions and the distilled theoretical and pragmatic considerations offered *Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). In the following meetings concept proposals for a Digital Humanities undergraduate major and a Digital Public Humanities graduate certificate were discussed extensively by the group as was also the potential curriculum for the two core courses. The concept proposal for this interdisciplinary (inter-departmental and inter-collegial) minor developed in collaboration is now almost ready for submission as are course proposals for two core courses in the minor: Digital Humanities and Society and Digital Humanities Applications.

## Oral History Initiative and Digital Archive Project

The members of this group included Antonella Calarota (Span. and Latino Studies), Anne Edstrom (Span. and Latino Studies), Raul Galoppe (Span. and Latino Studies), and Stephen Ruszczuk (Sociology); as well as other participating faculty which included Katherine McCaffrey (Anthropology) and Maisa Taha (Anthropology).

As a newer Hispanic-Serving Institution, Montclair State University is an educational home to a cross-section of Latinx and Hispanic heritage Communities. This interdisciplinary group led an oral history initiative centered on Spanish-language heritage students and migration narratives, which involved three distinct steps: (1) preparation and training; (2) the collecting of interviews; and (3) piloting a campus digital archive of these oral histories. Step one was a training event

titled "Oral History 101 for Multilingual Projects". It was a four-hour workshop from two oral history experts covering essential oral history principles, ethics and methods, as well as practical advice on recording interviews. Step two involved the planning of oral history interviews for Fall 2022 interviews. And finally, step three involved evaluating the possibility of housing our project within Digital Commons at Sprague Library, which will be further explored during the Fall 2022 semester.

## Cog Sci and Coffee (CSC)

The members of this group included Lauren Covey (Linguistics), Jon Morgan (Philosophy), and Jennifer Yang (Psychology).

The objective of the group was to continue to highlight the interest of cognitive science studies at Montclair State University through the development of a student-focused space. During Spring 2022, CSC hosted four student-focused events highlighting cognitive science research at MSU. Each of these events allowed for students to have discussions with faculty to learn about different research topics/projects being investigated here at MSU. The interesting point to note is that these events were not solely led by Psychology Department faculty, but rather collaborations amongst other departments on campus, such as Philosophy and English, as well

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as MSU students, to showcase how cognitive science is researched in their respective fields. Each event seemed well received by the MSU community - they generated discussion among faculty and students from various disciplines, created a space for MSU faculty to present students/other faculty with recent and in-progress research projects, provided networking opportunities, and featured MSU students that have successfully engaged in research/graduate cognitive science disciplines in an effort to highlight academic/career opportunities.

## **Making Writing Work for Sexual Trauma Survivors**

The members of this group included Jessica Restaino (Writing Studies) and Jacqueline Regan (Writing Studies).

The group's initiative was to offer writing workshops for sexual trauma survivors with the potential for sustained group collaboration, publication, and a widening of cross-disciplinary networks over time. The goals for the group were to hold three "Text, Power, Telling" workshops, create opportunities for workshop participants to publish or showcase their work in various venues, and further the continuation of the expansion of workshops topically for purposes that might include the training of clinical practitioners. The group was pleased to report that they not only met the above goals, but exceeded them by also offering monthly workshops for healingSpace, a resource center for sexual trauma survivors at the Bergen County YWCA, and by building a website that supports the workshop itself, providing participants with an anonymous digital forum in which to share, read, and respond to each other's writing. Additionally, they are in the process of developing a platform on the site where they can showcase—in the form of a digital literary/creative arts journal—the creative expressions of sexual trauma survivors. Survey data from the workshops was positive, which has inspired the group to establish Text, Power, Telling (TPT) as a non-profit entity devoted to sexual trauma survivors' stories, resilience, and healing.

## **Development of URHS 101 (Introduction to Urban Humanities) Course**

The members of this group included Julian Brash (Anthropology), Nancy Carnevale (History) Stephen Rusczyks (Sociology), Livia Alexander (Visual Culture), Jessica Brater (Theater), Emily Cheng (English), Tanesha Thomas (Sociology), and Ashuwin Vaidya (Mathematics).

The objective of the group was to develop a guide for the teaching of the introductory course to the College's new Urban Humanities Program, URHS 101 (Introduction to Urban Humanities). The group assembled in December 2021 and January 2022. Each group member received a copy of the multi-authored book *Urban Humanities New Practices for Reimagining the City*. The first meeting consisted of a discussion of the concept of the urban humanities, the Urban Humanities program's aims and structure, and a general discussion of how an interdisciplinary and engaged introductory class might work. The second meeting consisted of a discussion of the course learning goals, course topics and assignments. The meetings and collaborative documents were used by Dr. Brash to create the syllabus for URHS, which is being taught currently.

## **Comprehensive Campus Response to Human Trafficking**

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The members of this group included Alison Boak (Global Center on Human Trafficking), Donna Meeker O'Rourke (Global Center on Human Trafficking), Marie Cascarano (Health Promotion), Paul Cell (MSU Police Department), Margaree Coleman-Carter (Dean of Students), Jaclyn Friedman-Lombardo (Counseling and Psychological Services), Katia Paz Goldfarb (Hispanic Initiatives and International Programs), Ebony Jackson (Office of Social Justice and Diversity), Lisa Lieberman (Public Health), Bryan Murdock, (Center for Community Engagement), Daniella Peterka Benton (Justice Studies), Melissa Velez (Psychology), and Krystal Woolston (Center for Community Engagement).

The objective of the group was to create a permanent Campus Response to Trafficking (CRT) Working Group that includes a multi-disciplinary MSU team and key community partners. This working group would collaborate to develop a coordinated, community response to human trafficking at MSU, develop a data collection plan for monitoring human trafficking at MSU, and plan for data collection and research on trafficking response at MSU. The group held two round-table discussions in February 2022, titled "Building a Comprehensive Campus Response to Human Trafficking". Questions discussed at the round-tables included, *Who is most at-risk for trafficking at MSU? Who or what groups on campus are best positioned to identify potential victims? What resources exist for faculty, staff, and students at MSU? What resources need to be developed at MSU? What faculty and staff are key to include in a multi-disciplinary planning team? How do we ensure our response is data-driven? and What off-campus community partners need to be engaged?* The hope is to continue to research and develop a detailed blueprint for preventing, identifying, and serving victims of human trafficking at MSU.

### **RIGS (Research on Interdisciplinary Global Studies)**

The members of this group included Tim Gorman (Sociology), Kate Temoney (Religion), and Mike Viega (Cali School of Music).

RIGS held three events during the Spring 2022 semester. The first was a panel on Africa that focused on the transformation of the continent, led by Dr. Alan Gelb, Senior Fellow at the Center for Global Development, Andrea Walther-Puri, PhD Candidate in African and Security Studies at the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, and Zemenay Lakew, who worked for the United Nations, served as in-person panelists alongside an MSU undergraduate and graduate student. Two particularly noteworthy outcomes are that it provided an opportunity for students to engage in professional writing--two students published pieces in the April 2022 edition of the School of Business staff newsletter, and the undergraduate student panelist is continuing as an MBA student and is serving as a graduate assistant in the Department of Management. This post was largely secured by the student's involvement in the panel. Furthermore, student participants gained a greater appreciation of Africa's domestic challenges as well as Africa's potential on the world stage. The second event was a virtual poetry workshop and a poetry reading, hosted by poet Javier Zamora. Javier led a discussion and shared techniques about teaching, learning,

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and living poetry as an act of resistance. He also led a group exercise using poems from *Unaccompanied* that allowed each participant to devise pedagogical approaches to teaching poetry and applying poetry to their own and students' lives. Approximately 40 people attended the virtual poetry reading in which they learned several effective techniques for teaching and integrating poetry into their course content and other professional settings. The third and final event was a retreat in which twenty one RIGS members met in-person (with one online) for four hours to brainstorm how to enhance current initiatives and to identify new initiatives. Ideas clustered around four main areas: events, professional development; community outreach and student engagement, and identifying RIGS funding—all of which will be revisited during the RIGS Fall 2022 meet & greet/planning meeting.

## **Autism Interdisciplinary Group (AIG)**

The members of this group included Erin Kang (Psychology), Brian Abrams (Cali School of Music), Aaron Helgeson (Cali School of Music), Victoria Puig (Teaching and Learning, Ben Samuels Children's Center), and Kaitlin Mulcahy (Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health [CAECMH]).

The objective of the group was to bring together autism-related efforts across campus and in the community. Since its first meeting in December 2021, the group's membership has expanded and now has more than 20 members from the Montclair State University community. In addition to the group's growing membership, the AIG hosted its inaugural event in April 2022. This public-facing event was free and open to anyone, and was attended by over 30 members of the Montclair State University community, as well as members of the outside community. The symposium featured six speakers representing MSU's existing community of scholars and clinicians across multiple disciplines, including a presentation from an autistic scholar. Speakers presented their work related to autism to the community and participated in a panel to address audience members' questions and to engage in deeper conversations. In the 2022-2023 academic year, the group intends to continue their interdisciplinary work with the goal of establishing collaborations in scholarship and services by having scheduled monthly meetings and working towards hosting another large symposium, as well as other programming (e.g., presentations by invited guest speakers and programming for families with autistic children from the Montclair and surrounding areas, support for autistic students attending MSU throughout the academic year).

## **Interdisciplinary Food Access Work Group**

The members of this group included Shannon O'Connor (Psychology), Lauren Dinour (Nutrition and Food Studies), Elaine Gerber (Anthropology), and Neeraj Vedwan (Anthropology).

The objective of the group was to obtain qualitative data on students' experience with food access through facilitating a series of focus groups with Montclair State University students. Students were recruited by contacting various student groups on campus to inquire if they could arrange a focus group for members of their club. Additionally, they asked students who participated in the focus groups to provide quantitative data (e.g., survey data), which allowed

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for anonymous responses and aimed to reduce groupthink or potential social-desirability bias. The most significant outcome of the group's initiative last spring was to develop and implement a data collection plan. They are now well equipped to carry out their research plan. Once data collection has ended (December 2022), they plan to analyze themes within the qualitative data they collected via the focus groups, as well as explore the quantitative survey data (spring 2023). They hope their initiative will provide insight into barriers to accessing food and what effect these barriers may have on students, including their mental health and perceived connection to our campus community.

## Accessible Media Task Force

The members of this group included María José García-Vizcaíno (Spanish and Latino Studies) and Elaine Gerber (Anthropology).

The objective of the group was to create a task force that will implement a culture of inclusiveness and access to all. This task force will generate tangible products/results that build capacity for a larger interdisciplinary minor for the new GenEd Core and an eventual lab/center in Accessible Media. Since MSU is a Hispanic serving institution, this task force will be providing services in both languages. The first event was a speaker series presented by Dr. Georgina Kleege (writer, university professor at UC Berkeley, and lifelong researcher on, and consumer of, audio description), in which the purpose of the lecture was to promote awareness of audio description and accessible media in general, to our campus community. The second event was an on-campus talk and workshop, titled "Cultural Accessibility" led by Nefertiti Matos-Olivares (advocate for accessible culture, transit, tech, and personal fitness; also does work for Access Technology Educator for the New York Public Library's Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library). The first part of the event was a lecture in English about real-time audio description

(AD) vs. expanded audio description (AD); the second part of the event was a bilingual workshop on AD where students could choose English or Spanish to write the AD script for the first two minutes of the trailer of *Stars Wars Eclipse*. Both parts of the event were a great learning experience for students from a professional audio describer and voice over talent. They also held a movie night where they showed *Paddington* (2014) with AD in Spanish. After the movie, they distributed a survey among students asking them if the AD helped them understand the movie better and why. Most of them replied that thanks to the AD they learned new words in Spanish since they saw an object on screen or an action that they did not know how you would say in Spanish and by listening to the AD they found out what it was. Also, some reported that AD helped them stay focused while watching. Overall, all events were a success and well received, and further prompted Dr. Garcia Vizcaino and Dr. Gerber to start thinking about a future research project on the benefits of AD to enhance the academic performance of students in certain disciplines.