

## Multicultural Moments

October 2021



### Focus on the Humanities

October 25-29, MC will celebrate its ninth annual Humanities Days with *The Human in Humanities: Understanding Ourselves and Others*. So, what are the Humanities? Why are they important? How is diversity represented in the humanities? This issue of Multicultural Moment will help to answer these questions.

**Defining the Humanities.** You can find a variety of definitions of humanities both within and outside of higher education. Let's look at a few definitions.

- 4Humanities, a humanities advocacy group, shares five definitions of humanities. Here is one from an American Academy of Arts and Sciences Commission report: "The Humanities—including the study of languages, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, comparative religion, ethics, and the arts—are disciplines of memory and imagination, telling us where we have been and helping us envision where we are going." You can view the other definitions on the 4Humanities website: <https://4humanities.org/2014/12/what-are-the-humanities/>
- In "Why We Still Need the Humanities in a STEM World," Valerie Strauss cites Syracuse University linguistics expert Gerald Greenberg's view of the Humanities. Greenberg suggests that rather than defining the humanities by its list of disciplines, we should instead emphasize what we *do* in those disciplines. For example, "study and analyze artifacts that are created by human beings, such as literature, music, art, etc." (Note: You can access the [article](#) with your M#.)

**The Importance of the Humanities.** To explain the importance of the Humanities, we must highlight how the humanities apply to our world.

- The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) explains the importance of the humanities to everyone to "preserve our valued traditions and transmit them from generation to generation," to give "practical applications for everyday life," and to "help us answer big questions." Read more about NEH, their work, and grant opportunities on their website: <https://www.neh.gov/divisions/fedstate/resource/the-humanities-belong-everyone>
- In a TED Talk called "Oh, the Humanities," Dr. Kate Cottle of Wilmington University discusses four reasons to study the humanities—workplace skills, life skills, global perspective, and the beauty and history of human experience. Check out the video for Dr. Cottle's explanations: <https://youtu.be/O1KZJRofEOE>

- Humanities integration could have implications for academic, career, and life success. In a 2018 report, *The Integration of the Humanities and Arts with Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in Higher Education: Branches from the Same Tree*, an emerging body of evidence suggests that “integration of the arts, humanities, and STEMM fields - science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine - is associated with positive learning outcomes that may help students enter the workforce, live enriched lives, and become active and informed members of a modern democracy.” You can download a free version of the full report: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/the-integration-of-the-humanities-and-arts-with-sciences-engineering-and-medicine-in-higher-education#:~:text=In%20its%202018%20report%20The,that%20integration%20of%20the%20arts%20>

**Diversity in the Humanities.** Humanities promote diversity in many ways and create opportunities for diverse perspectives.

- One way to promote diversity in humanities programs is to increase diversity in recruitment. In “Modernizing the Humanities,” Alexandra Vaughn notes the decline in emphasis on the humanities in higher education at a time when enrollments are becoming more diverse. She argues that “the key to ensuring the relevance and sustainability of the humanities...is more intentional efforts to recruit individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups — both students and faculty. One way to accomplish this goal is through a diverse curriculum.” <https://www.insightintodiversity.com/modernizing-the-humanities/>
- Another approach to diversity in Humanities involves drawing from multidisciplinary perspectives. For example, *Green Humanities: Journal of Ecological Thought in Literature, Philosophy & the Arts* uses the humanities to promote awareness and action around environmental issues. According to the website, the staff “believe in the power of the humanities—a book, a poem or a work of art for example—to influence public opinion and inspire engagement with ecological issues and causes.” <http://develop.greenhumanities.org/>
- Many MC faculty have supported diversity in the Humanities through Global Humanities Institute (GHI) programs such as the faculty travel abroad programs, Global Classrooms that connect students in MC humanities courses with students enrolled at universities abroad, and the annual STEAM event that explores global topics through an interdisciplinary lens. For more information about these programs, visit the GHI website: <https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/special-programs/global-humanities-institute/index.html>.

### Watch for the 2021 Humanities Days Schedule of Events

*May we avoid blaming or bias based on our circumstance and continue to be grateful for the gifts of the global community.*

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