



NEWSLETTER

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Trinity 126, 100, and hallway



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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

by **Troy Jollimore**, *Philosophy*

This is my first semester—and first newsletter—as Humanities Center Director. And it's been a busy and stimulating semester so far, with a full schedule of outside speakers, colloquia, symposia and tertulias, not to mention the University Film Series, HC Gallery shows and talks, and other related events. I've had the chance to meet many of the readers of this newsletter at these events, both those who are members of the HFA faculty and others as well. And I am encouraged by the number of you who have told me that, like myself, you value the Humanities Center and what it does.

It doesn't take long, in a position such as this one, to realize how many people contribute to the success of the events and activities we put on. I am fortunate for so many things: for the eager assistance and sage counsel of my predecessor, Laird Easton; for the tireless efforts of Thomasin Saxe, Brooks Thorlaksson, and other members of the HFA staff; for the generous and longstanding support of our dean, Sarah Blackstone; and for the energy and ideas of the members of the HC Advisory Board. But more than anything else, I am fortunate insofar as we have, here at CSU, Chico, a faculty who appreciates and supports the Humanities Center. As director, it is important to me to know that. And it is important, as well, for me to know your particular thoughts on our specific events—what you have enjoyed and what you have not, what you think might have been done differently, what we could do in the future that you would be interested in. So, please, if you have any thoughts or suggestions along these lines, feel free to contact me.

Nussbaum Visit

In late September we were pleased to host Martha Nussbaum, Ernst Freund Distinguished Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, as a President's Visiting Scholar. On Thursday, September 22, Professor Nussbaum delivered a stimulating and fascinating talk titled "Radical Evil in the Lockean State: The Neglect of the Political Emotions." As is often the case, the question-and-answer session was perhaps even more enjoyable than the talk itself. I have heard from several audience members who were impressed with the speaker's facility in answering difficult questions, including the dreaded "But what would Ayn Rand think about all this?"

Professor Nussbaum spent the following day having lunch with some of our students, sitting down with members of the Philosophy and Religious Studies Reading Group (who had devoted a semester to her work) for a very enjoyable question-and-answer session, and then having dinner with the provost and several faculty members. On Saturday morning she delivered the keynote address at the Society for Women in Philosophy conference and was again kind enough to take the time to answer many audience questions before leaving to catch her plane.

Professor Nussbaum's work straddles several disciplines—philosophy, legal studies, political theory, feminist thought, and classical literature, to name a few—and I was gratified that the attendees at these events, particularly the public talks, seemed to represent a correspondingly broad range of intellectual interests. In this respect, and also with respect to her impressive

achievements as an academic and the enthusiasm and generosity which she displayed during her interactions with our faculty and students, she seems to me just the sort of person the Humanities Center ought to be bringing to Chico.

Faculty-Organized Colloquia

For this academic year we have planned three faculty-organized colloquia, in which individual faculty members bring in guests and put on panel discussions with the sponsorship of the Humanities Center. The first such event, "The Novel at the Crossroads of History, Society and Culture," was held on October 13. Along with novelist Patricia Henley, whose work formed the centerpiece of the event, the panel included Rob Davidson (English), who organized the event; Anne Goldman (English, CSU-Sonoma); Robert Cottrell (History); and Jeff Livingston (History). The panel presented a fascinatingly diverse array of responses to Henley's work, and the discussion that followed the formal presentations, centered largely on the question of the differences and alleged similarities between the novelist's and the historian's approach to the depiction of past events, was simply invigorating.

Our second colloquium, "The Power of Manga in Visual (Pop) Culture and Society: What Can Japanese Comics Tell You?" was held on November 11, 3-5pm, and November 12, 10am-noon, in Trinity 100. Colloquium participants included Trina Robbins, U.S.A. girls' comics writer and researcher; Tomoko Yamada, Shojō manga researcher and curator of the Kawasaki City Museum; Anna Wegner-Ott (Art Education, CSU-Sacramento); Jillian Sandell (Women's Studies, SF State); Aaron Kerner (Cinema, SF State); Sarah Pike (Religious Studies); Sara Cooper (Foreign Languages and Literatures), Kimihiko Nomura (Foreign Languages and Literatures); and colloquium organizer Masami Toku (Art and Art History), who served as moderator. The colloquium was held in conjunction with the two-part gallery show (at the Humanities Center Gallery and the University Art Gallery), *Shojō Manga Power! Girl Comics from Japan* (November 8 to December 14). Prior to the Friday installment of the colloquium, Professor Toku led a gallery tour of the exhibit.

The third and final colloquium for 2005-06, "Desert and Loyalty in Recent Liberal Theory," will be held at the end of March 2006 and will feature a visit by UC Berkeley philosophy professor Samuel Scheffler. Something to look forward to!

University Film Series: "1945: Film and the Memory of the Second World War"

I am pleased to say that the University Film Series, for which the Humanities Center is a major sponsor, seems to be experiencing a successful semester. This is due no doubt in part to our "1945" film series, which has featured six films about the final stages and aftermath of World War Two in Europe. If, like many of us, you can't watch an interesting film without experiencing an irresistible urge to talk about it afterwards, then please join us for our December 1st roundtable discussion, "War, Memory and the Cinema" (4-5:30pm in the Humanities Center).

Symposia and Tertulias

One of the surprising things about the academic life, in all too many cases, is how few opportunities there seem to be for intelligent discussion between faculty members on any subject not directly related to teaching. One of the guiding ideas behind our symposia and tertulias has always been to provide opportunities for such conversation, and in so doing to let us get to know our colleagues better than we otherwise would, by hearing them talk either about their research interests (as in Steve Lewis's recent discussion of his just-published book on Chiapas) or about some other interest of theirs (witness Wai-hung Wong's presentation on the art of Chinese seal carving.) Those of you who were able to attend either or both of these events know how pleasant they can be.

In addition to James Matray's October 28th symposium on the North Korea situation (which is still in my future as I write this, but will have passed into the past by the time you read it), we are all looking forward to the December 1st "War, Memory and the Cinema" roundtable at 4pm (see above under "University Film Series"). And we are also very much looking forward to a rather last-minute addition to our schedule: it has just been confirmed that our former colleague Fitz Smith will be joining us at 3pm on December 2 and will present, along with myself, the third in our annual series of poetry-themed presentations: "February House: The Writers of 7, Middagh Street."

Humanities Center Books and Journals

In the hopes of making Trinity 126 an inviting oasis for faculty members with a few free minutes, the Humanities Center subscribes to a number of periodicals including the *Boston Review*, the *New York Review of Books*, and others of that ilk. In addition, you may have noticed a number of philosophy journals on the shelf. This is the result of an initiative by various members from the Department of Philosophy who decided to share their individual subscriptions to journals that were not readily accessible through our library system. I would encourage members of other departments to consider similar arrangements for the benefit of their faculty, and indeed of everyone in HFA. (I do ask, however, that you notify me before placing anything on the shelf, just to make sure the situation does not become unmanageable.)

As ever, we are pleased to accept donations of hardcover books in good condition on topics related to the arts and humanities.

Favorite Fictional Thinkers

For various reasons, some of which are not difficult to discern, many stories, novels, and films feature academics or other intellectuals as characters. Some of these portraits are more flattering than others. (Some of them are also more entertaining than others, and this distinction seems to cut across the first.)

I would like to invite readers of this newsletter to submit their choice for “Favorite Fictional Thinker.” The fictional

academic or intellectual in question might be someone you identify with, or someone you think has nothing in common with yourself; it might be a character that inspired you to become an academic for real, or perhaps a character who, through bad behavior, inspired you to be a better person than you might otherwise have been. It might be a fictional portrait that you believe has something important to say about the way of life we all have chosen, or one that you simply find very amusing. It’s up to you.

Send me your choices, and (as I always remind my students) *your reasons*. We will publish a selection in our subsequent newsletter.

Final Thought

I leave you with this. “Certain forms of perplexity—for example, about freedom, knowledge, and the meaning of life—seem to me to embody more insight than any of the supposed solutions to those problems.” (Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*)

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