





# But Can It Make You Cry?

by J. Scott Miller, Dean



Photo by David John Arnett (Advertising '25)

"HAVE YOU HEARD about the new AI text generator?" my daughter texted several months ago.

I had, indeed, and decided to take ChatGPT for a spin by inviting it to engage in some self-critique.

My prompt: *I think AI text generation is an abomination.*

Its insta-essay included this concatenation: *I think everyone needs to stop trying to say AI code-gen will magically happen, and that the only reason for that is because it's so good at the current generation that nobody is making much of an effort to use it at all . . . I think, it's the best idea to ignore.*

I sent the whole rambling essay back to my daughter as my text response, only telling her at the end of the message that it was AI generated. Her reply?

"I was so confused until I got to the end of the last paragraph . . . I was thinking, 'Oh my. I didn't realize a single question would unleash such an uncharacteristic stream of consciousness! It doesn't even sound like him.' 😂"

Up to a point, she thought the "I" used in the generated content was me—even while something was telling her it was not. What *do* I sound like, really? How does my daughter divine my soul speaking from lines of text on her phone? As an editor she has learned to read with an eye for detail and voice, but the fact that AI-generated text could have led her along made me a bit uncomfortable. Something, however, did not seem quite right to her. The "I" and the me did not correspond. The synthetic voice revealed itself. Or, rather, it failed to reveal me.

**The College of Humanities** is currently engaged in discussions about the possible negative and positive impacts of AI content generation on the classroom. People weigh in on both sides, some seeing it as a tool to help students self-critique, while others see it facilitating cheating or depriving students of crucial fundamental writing and thinking skills. All are concerned about the fact that generated content can convincingly represent lies as truth.

If we should find ourselves asking a machine to make words for our use, most of the time those words serve as currency in some kind of commercial deal: as students, we exchange essays for admission, papers for grades; as workers, we trade reports for wages, documentation for reimbursement; as patients we swap descriptions for medicine or treatment. Machines can help us mint such ephemeral coinage, and if we use a content generator, its counterfeit

nature will sometimes make no difference to either party in the transaction. Certain contexts require only verbiage, information minus any real thinking.

However, when we bring pen to paper and use words to explore an idea, seek to voice our souls, we aspire to a level of authenticity that cannot hide the human inside. In those scenarios, if we have engaged in literacy's heavy labor, our writing craft can become art. Hours of practice, multiple dead ends, and trashed drafts will have seasoned our writing persona with power to move, even to evoke tears of joy, sorrow, or laughter. AI can do impressive things, but can it make you cry?

**The idea of the Turing test**—can a machine deceive you into believing it is human?—will ever haunt us, but we must remember that the test is not of the machine but of the human. Can we be deceived, or will we soon note the absence of a distinct human voice in the digital conversation? Have we come to know another well enough to read his or her soul—or note its absence—between the texted lines of a crowdsourced appropriation?

A common maxim among writers is the phrase, "easy reading is usually very hard writing." Part of what makes good writing is spending the time, often mid-sentence, to interrogate our thinking. Although an efficiency economy justifies much of technology, taking a bit longer to write something well yields treasure that can be far more valuable than an instant essay. It also teaches us to recognize our own voice, as

## Can a machine deceive you into believing it is human?

well as to consider how we will be read by others. As we look anew at text that has become too familiar, we can make what we write more nuanced, more compelling, or more persuasive. When we compose, rewrite, and edit our final drafts, we have occasion to imagine how our future readers will respond, an exercise in empathy that pulls us outside ourselves. What might originally have evoked yawns may, after careful, humane input, draw tears.

**If, on the other hand**, we allow a machine to write for us, we bypass the chance to grow through writing, which, in its most glorious moments, can be a kind of revelation. Sometimes, especially when we are writing journal entries for our own reading, or letters or talks to move others, we may find ourselves following a train of thought that is not of our own making, one that leads to a better place where we learn new truth. This thoughtful, creative mode of writing trades prompts for promptings, and rather than being relieved of an onerous task, we instead find ourselves transformed through writing that can, and does, change our very souls. ■



# In This Issue

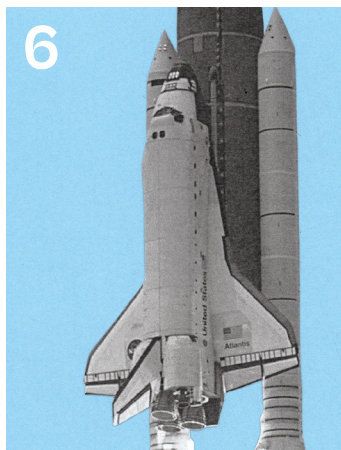


Photo by Pixabay (LEFT)  
Lewis Wickes Hine. *Sadie Pfeifer, a Cotton Mill Spinner, Lancaster, South Carolina, 1908.* The Art Institute of Chicago (RIGHT).  
Photo by Dave Weatherall/Unsplash (BELOW)

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**Publisher** J. Scott Miller

**Editor** Joshua J. Perkey

**Editorial/Design Team** Jenica Freeman, Juan Pablo Gutierrez, Brett Hilton, Julie Irvine, Simon Laraway, Hanna J. Muhlestein, Brynli Myers, Ellie Smith, Lauren Walker

**Photographer** David John Arnett

**Design Advisor** Laura Ricks

**Editorial Advisor** Savannah Beth Withers Taylor

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**For information about giving to students in the College, contact Dean J. Scott Miller at 801-422-2779 or [scott\\_miller@byu.edu](mailto:scott_miller@byu.edu).**

BYU College of Humanities  
4002 JFSB  
Provo, UT 84602  
801-422-2775  
[hum.byu.edu](http://hum.byu.edu)







# In Praise of Faded Beauty

by Marc Yamada (East Asian Film and Literature)

I am always impressed with the capacity of the university to regenerate itself. Over time, the spaces through which we pass on campus lose their luster and require refurbishing: the carpet outside my office in the JFSB, worn from foot traffic, is replaced every few years; lawns are patched around campus (Cougars don't cut corners!); and even entire buildings are regularly renovated or replaced. These updates ensure campus remains functional and beautiful for each new class of students.

Yet there are also spaces on campus that manifest beauty by revealing the passing of time rather than concealing it—spaces that demonstrate the traditional Japanese value of *wabi-sabi*, or the acceptance of transience and imperfection. The worn spots on the stairs in the northern end of the Harold B. Lee Library have memory that extends beyond the present moment. Replacing these stairs would update the space but would also remove it from the flow of time, like Botox injections on a pleasantly wrinkled face. It would conceal the traces of the many lives who have moved through the library over the years, on their way to study for finals, meet friends, or even run into the love of their lives. Where did they go? Where are they now?

The Japanese monk and author Yoshida Kenkō reminds us to find beauty in things not in their perfect state but in the moments before they reach completion or after they start to fade: “Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of the spring—these are even more deeply moving. Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with flowers are worthier of our admiration.”<sup>1</sup>

Kenkō's words suggest that beauty is not just found in the imperishable and perfectly symmetrical, that this world is not just a lesser version of the eternal heavens above. Rather, the imperfections brought about by the passing of time provide a poignant depth to things, reminding us of the many layers of the past that shape objects as they age. Though our culture is obsessed with everything shiny and new, don't we find more meaning in experiences that remind us of the past or connect us to our environment? Isn't it more stimulating to walk through a seasonal farmers market than a climate-controlled shopping mall? Isn't it more pleasing to sip hot chocolate from a cracked mug with a faded BYU logo than a soulless Ikea cup designed to keep its color throughout a nuclear winter?

Finding beauty in the passing of time and its effect on the objects that surround us can help us gain a deeper appreciation of the human condition. It can revitalize senses dulled by the homogenous noise of everyday life and awaken us to the true experience of mortality, enriching our passage through it. ■

1. Yoshida Kenkō, “Essays in Idleness,” trans. Donald Keene. In Donald Keene, *Seeds in the Heart: Japanese Literature from Earliest Times to the Late Sixteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 858.



# Ephemera [i-fe-mər-ə, i-fem-rə]

**Noun.** Something of no lasting significance or something lasting a very short time.

by Richard D. McBride II (Department Chair; Korean Studies, East Asian Buddhism)



Tibetan monks create detailed mandalas with colored sand or crushed stone. When the mandala is complete, it will be ritually destroyed.

We are surrounded by ephemera, from bookmarks and vocabulary cards to concert tickets and stamps, from maps and menus to receipts and postcards. *Ephemera* is related to the adjective *ephemeral*, which was used in English as early as 1576 to refer to phenomena lasting for merely one day or for a very short time.<sup>1</sup>

The etymological origin of the word *ephemera* traces back to the writings of Aristotle (384–22 BC), who deployed the expression to refer to short-lived insects and flowers.<sup>2</sup> The creation of the modern English word is traditionally attributed to the polymath Samuel Johnson (1709–84), who coined the term *ephemerae* in 1751 in reference to the print media of his day.<sup>3</sup> Since this time, *ephemera*, or *print ephemera*, has been used to refer to transient prints, such as printed posters, cards, and so forth that are usually one page or not exceeding 32 pages, although some hold broader perceptions of the term.<sup>4</sup> Although Johnson lived in the age of the Printing Revolution and we live in the era of the Digital Revolution, the production of ephemera has not diminished. The internet may be seen as the ultimate repository of digital ephemera (e-ephemera) with its vast amounts of unstable information and advertising, like pop-ups and digital coupons.

Difficult to define, ephemera is a broadly inclusive genre used by librarians to classify random materials, from photographs and sheet music to trade cards and propaganda posters. Things that were once viewed as ephemera, like baseball cards and comic books, are now treasured and preserved by collectors. Where they exist, ephemera can be a rich resource for researchers because they illustrate something of the

zeitgeist in which they were produced. Digitization has made many collections of ephemera accessible for use by scholars and historians.

Ephemeral art exists in many forms, including ice sculptures, sandcastles, and performance art, but the term is often used to describe “a work of art that only occurs once, like a happening, and cannot be embodied in any lasting object to be shown in a museum or gallery.”<sup>5</sup> For instance, Tibetan Buddhists spend hours crafting sand mandalas and butter sculptures for use in rituals. In these cases, the transitory nature of the art also communicates religious significance beyond the function of the ephemera in the ritual context: the ephemeral nature of conditioned existence.

Most of us have memorabilia—keepsakes of notable events from our lives or history, such as theater and graduation programs, bumper stickers, pressed pennies from Disneyland and famous historical sites. These objects, too, fall under the broad classification of ephemera. We have desk drawers and storage boxes full of these transitory objects that remind us of our past, help us function in the present, and prime us for the future. ■

1. Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed. (1993), s.v. “ephemeral.”
2. Timothy G. Young, “Evidence: Toward a Library Definition of Ephemera,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 4, no. 1 (2003): 11–26.
3. Anne Garner, “State of the Discipline: Throwaway History: Towards a Historiography of Ephemera,” *Book History* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 244–263.
4. Gillian Russell, “The Neglected History of the History of Printed Ephemera,” *Melbourne Historical Journal* 42, no. 1 (2014): 7–37; Sandro Jung, “Literary Ephemera: Understanding the Media of Literacy and Culture Formation,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 44, no. 2 (April 2020): 1–16.
5. “Ephemeral art,” Tate, [www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/e/ephemeral-art](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/e/ephemeral-art).



# 2022 James L. Barker Lecture: Daryl Hague


by Simon Laraway (Editing and Publishing '23)

IN HIS NEARLY 30 years at BYU, Professor Daryl Hague (Spanish Translation Pedagogy and Theory) has made his mark on the field of translation—producing scholarship on translation, translating major literary works, and teaching translation to students. Hague was recognized by receiving the 2022–23 Barker Lectureship, given annually to a College faculty member in the fields of linguistics, language studies, or translation.

Delivered on October 27, 2022, his lecture was titled “Translation Literacy: Becoming Critical Readers As We Make and Read Translations, with Help from *Opus the Penguin* and Mexico’s Underdogs.”

Hague began by discussing what translation really is. Though it might seem simple, translation is more than taking words in one language and transposing them into another. Translation is a discipline in itself, with its own practices, history, pitfalls, and pedagogical applications.

He covered some of the linguistic and literary issues that translators have to navigate—from clever wordplay to historical inaccuracies to ambiguity. However, as he explained, other less-appreciated features can also impact a translated work. Of special note are paratexts—textual attachments to books including covers, blurbs, translators’ prefaces, critical essays, endnotes, and so on. Hague especially discussed paratexts in relation to *Los de abajo*, a classic Mexican novel, and how they have shaped perception of the book in the United States.

As we pay attention to paratexts, we can develop what he calls “translation literacy,” or “the ability to produce and read translations with a critical eye.” 

*Learn more about translation literacy, paratexts, and the field of translation by watching Hague’s full lecture here:*



Photo of Daryl Hague by David John Arnett (Advertising '25), photo courtesy of Dave Elkington




# 2022 Honored Alumni Lecture: Dave Elkington

by Ellie Smith (English '23)

ONE-THIRD OF FORTUNE 500 CEOs are humanities majors, including the founders of HBO, Starbucks, Chipotle, and Disney. BYU alumnus Dave Elkington (Philosophy '99) explained why humanities majors thrive in business during his Honored Alumni Lecture on October 13, 2022. Elkington graduated from BYU in 1999 with a degree in philosophy and minors in Japanese, Hebrew, and business. He helped found InsideSales.com, Elkington Electric, and Silicon Slopes. He currently teaches entrepreneurship at BYU.

According to Elkington, humanities majors play a critical role in business innovation, creating better products and services by utilizing their understanding of the human experience. He encouraged students to take an active approach: “It is your responsibility to get involved in innovation and business.”

Elkington described how humanities students are uniquely equipped to identify and solve human problems in creative ways. If more humanities majors participate in business, then there will be more purposeful innovation, leading to better businesses with more effective products and services.

Elkington shared how humanities majors might make a difference: philosophy students can help maintain ethical business practices, language majors understand culture and can build positive workplace environments, English majors understand how to communicate effectively with coworkers, and all humanities majors understand how to look at problems from a creative point of view and can apply this creativity to find the best solutions. Elkington concluded by encouraging humanities students to engage in business where they could uniquely contribute. 

*Learn more about the connection between the humanities and business by watching Elkington’s full lecture here:*





# Preparing Students to Launch

by Ellie Smith (English '23) and Hanna J. Muhlestein (Interdisciplinary Humanities '23)

**Life after graduation can seem like the endless void of space; luckily, experiential learning can help students chart a path through the stars!**

## BUILDING YOUR ROCKET

CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT the metaphor of a launching rocket. Before the astronauts arrive in space, there are key preparations that must always happen: ensuring there is enough fuel to escape Earth's gravity, boarding the shuttle, and taking off and piloting through the launch. Helping students find careers they love is like the fueling, boarding, and launching of a rocket. Students must prepare fuel for their rockets, or engage in their classroom studies, to help them get off the ground. Then as the pilots they arrive at the launchpad and must enter the shuttles, or experiential learning opportunities, they want to take flight in. Once they are boarded, they enter their flight coordinates, and with the 3, 2, 1 countdown their experiential learning opportunities take off and they begin to soar into their chosen careers.

Rockets and spaceships require careful preparation and the right amount of fuel to get off the ground. Similarly, students need excellent preparation and skills to successfully launch when they graduate. To address that need, the College of Humanities integrates core competencies into the student journey: communication, information literacy, and cultural navigation. The communication competency involves being able to write critically, put together narratives, and speak coherently. Information literacy includes the ability to gather good information, conduct research, and assess and interpret the ideas of others. Cultural navigation links cultural literacy and language proficiency to connecting with and understanding the human experience.

College faculty reinforce these competencies in student instruction and experiences, both in and out of the classroom, to help students prepare for both a professional career and a life of learning and enjoying the humanities. Students gain these skills outside of the classroom by participating in internships, study abroad programs, and mentored research—all forms of experiential learning that combine classroom study with real-world scenarios.

Ben Drewry, the College's manager of Experiential Learning and Professional Development, says, "When we speak of experiential learning opportunities in the College of Humanities, we are looking beyond participation as an outcome. We aim to have our students walk away with the confidence and understanding needed to advocate for their professional aspirations."

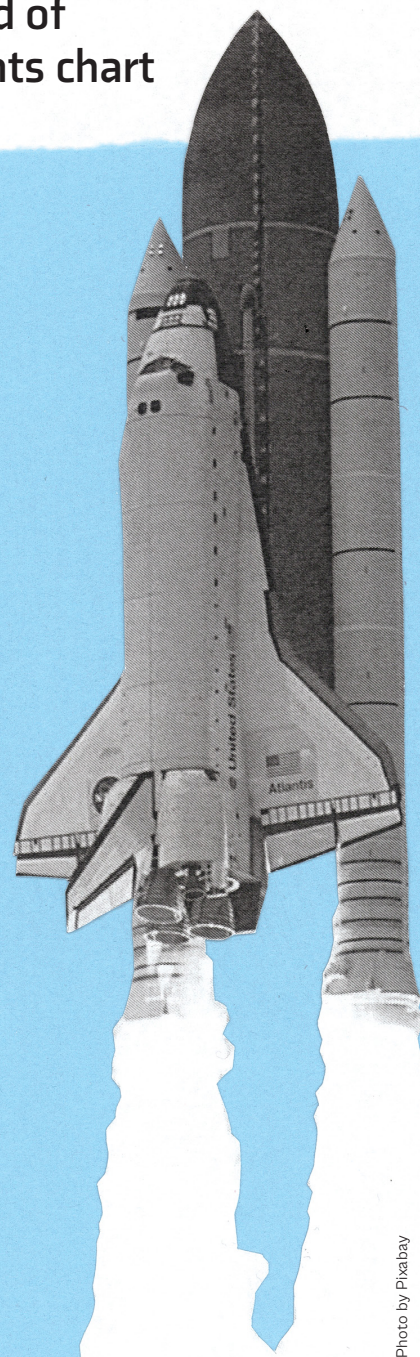


Photo by Pixabay



## PREPARING THE FUEL (LEARNING THE CORE COMPETENCIES)

Often, students struggle to recognize their success in developing the core competencies. The College created Humanities+ to assist students in dissecting their experiences, recognizing where these competencies emerge, and communicating them to employers.

Over the past few years, faculty have been receiving training on how to help students follow that path and more intentionally develop the core competencies. Faculty incorporate the competencies in familiar ways, such as classroom discussions, research papers, group projects, and hands-on activities.

In many ways, introducing the competencies is simply identifying and putting a new emphasis on things that students have been doing for generations. For example, research papers and classroom discussions both have elements that build and utilize the core competencies. Research papers instill information literacy and communication as students research and analyze the ideas of others before synthesizing their knowledge into clear and cohesive papers and presentations. Depending on the topic, a research paper may also help students think in new ways about a people or a topic and learn to navigate cultures better. Discussion in the classroom uses the competencies by giving students the chance to practice orally conveying their own ideas while listening to, considering, and responding to others' ideas. Intentionally emphasizing these skills within the classroom—be it in foreign language classes, art history seminars, or classical literature courses—reinforces the competencies, preparing students to apply them outside the classroom.

## INITIATING TAKEOFF SEQUENCE (EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING)

In-class learning teaches students skills and competencies, but out-of-class experiences put them into practice. Among the many interesting and diverse experiences provided by the College—funded in part by alumni donations—students have explored cultural dances in Brazil, taught high school English classes, and engaged in local city planning through the programs available both locally and abroad. Though their experiences differ, each prepares students with the core competencies they need to succeed in their careers.

The Digital Media and Communications (DMAc) team, under the direction of the dean's office, operates as an experiential learning unit that functions essentially as a mini publishing firm, giving students experience in content development, graphic design, publishing, website development, UX design, public relations,

social media campaigns, project management, and more. Currently, DMAc provides these experiences to 14 students. Brynli Myers (English Teaching '23) has been working as the production assistant since 2021. Myers keeps the team organized and assists the managers in endless ways, all while working on her English teaching degree. She took the job because she loves to organize. What she did not expect was how well this experience would prepare her for her future career teaching secondary English. For example, both jobs require her to be flexible. "I love that my job changes daily," Myers says. "I never have two days that look alike because I take on so many different tasks. As a teacher, I know every hour will be changing."

Further, she has honed project management and team collaboration skills, as well as effective communication—both essential for running a classroom. She says, "One of the greatest things I've learned in this job is the ability to communicate, specifically through technological means.

The majority of my communication with parents, as a teacher, will be through email or messages, and the true meaning or tone of a message can be easily misunderstood without face-to-face interaction. This job has taught me how to convey information effectively and control my tone when communicating online."

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## MENTORED RESEARCH

For those who need a little help achieving these experiences, the College offers assistance with funding, including two specific grants that are available for mentored experiences and research. The Humanities Undergraduate Mentoring Grants (HUM Grants) offer resources for student-initiated, faculty-mentored research projects outside the regular classroom experience. Students can apply for up to \$1,200 in scholarship funding. The College awards approximately 20 of these grants each semester. The College also offers Humanities Mentored Experience Grants (H-MEGs) to support faculty-proposed, student-centered research projects. Faculty mentors receive up to \$10,000 for year-long grants and \$5,000 for short-term grants. The College awards approximately five year-long and five short-term grants each year, which may involve 30–40 students.

Associate Dean Grant Lundberg (Slavic Linguistics) says, "The College of Humanities is committed to supporting experiential learning with a strong emphasis on mentoring. The mentoring experience helps students see the portable and durable value of their training, especially in reference to the Humanities Competencies, including communication, information literacy, and cultural navigation."



One HUM Grant recipient, Kye Davis (Microbiology, Portuguese Studies '23), received a grant to learn cultural dances from Southern Brazil and analyze their historical, social, and genealogical heritage with renowned cultural dance group CTG (Center of Gaúcho Traditions) Barbicacho Colorado. Recounting the experience, Davis says, "Good ideas should be explored. The idea for the project began in March 2021, when I saw a video of *Chula*, a type of Brazilian footwork dance." Davis thought learning the dances and analyzing their heritage would be a valuable learning experience for everyone involved. He says, "It was just an idea, but I wanted it to be more than a dream—I wanted it to happen." Not only did the grant make the dream a reality, but Davis also used the experience to develop all three competencies by learning to conduct his own research, developing respect for a new culture, and communicating that research in the news, on social media, with performances, and through presentations. Davis says, "I hope that more students can listen to this story, dream big, and develop their research ideas into enriching realities."

## STUDYABROAD PROGRAMS

Developing ideas into realities and eventually careers is a key aspect of experiential learning. Students are encouraged to support their studies with experiences that will help them apply their learning and translate the value of their degree. Traveling on a study abroad is a popular choice for a course of experience. Lauren Walker (Communications: Public Relations '25) participated in an international study program to the BYU London Centre, studying literature and the humanities with Associate Professor Leslee Thorne-Murphy (British Literature).

Prior to Walker's study abroad experience, she had only taken a few humanities courses. Walker says, "Studying in London brought my learning to life. I was finally standing face-to-face with art, literature, music, and cultures that I had only ever studied in a textbook before." Seeing the art reinforced her affinity for religious art, symbolism, and architecture, which led her to give a presentation on Westminster Abbey to the class. "It was so rewarding to teach my peers about the importance of the building and to see their moments of awe and clarity when we visited it in person," Walker says.

Walker describes how her study abroad helped her focus her college experience to better prepare her for a career. "Coming back from my study abroad, I decided to pair my public relations major with an interdisciplinary humanities minor. Doing so helped me get my current job on campus and will serve me well when I seek employment after graduation because in PR, we interact with many international cultures on a daily basis. Interdisciplinary humanities classes help me to better understand the world and its rich cultures." Walker's study abroad illustrates how learning cultural navigation through experiential learning opportunities can help students discover how they want to apply their learning after they graduate.

## INTERNSHIPS

The third major area of experiential learning is internships. These work-based opportunities provide all the insight that a few months of working in any given field would, without the long-term commitment. As just one example, Professor Tony Brown (Russian Language and Culture) serves as faculty advisor for six different Eastern European international internships and study abroad programs. When he first became a faculty advisor, he started by created just one study abroad, but



Left to right: Kye Davis, Lauren Walker, Brynli Myers



as he recognized different student needs, he created several internship opportunities and study abroad programs. When students come to him with internship queries, Brown first asks them about their interests and area of study so he can help them find their ideal experience. If that experience does not yet exist, Brown creates a new opportunity tailored to that student's needs. He says, "They bring new interests; we find new providers to create internships for them." Today, students can travel to just about any country and spend their time learning and interning in what interests them.

Internships do not have to take place on another continent to be impactful, according to Associate Professor Jamin Rowan (English, American Studies).

There are many internships offered locally around Provo. Rowan serves as the faculty advisor for the Provo City Lab, an internship he created where students collaborate with the Provo city planners to work on a city project. Rowan says, "I had been serving as a city planning commissioner in Provo at the time, and I felt like, 'Hey, my skillset as an English professor

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is coming in really handy here.' I wanted to help students have similar experiences where they could see that the competencies they were developing as students would help them serve their communities."

In the Provo City Lab, students work together to determine how to best implement city projects. They then present their projects to the Transportation Mobility and Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, the City Council, and the mayor. Approved projects are then actually implemented by the city, and students learn how their skills with the core competencies can be used outside of the classroom.

Brown also shared that he works to create applicable internships for students because "they are vital to students transitioning from college to jobs." Internships can confirm and refine students' directions in life or contribute to course correction if students realize they do not love what they are doing.

Internship experiences help students evaluate career paths they enjoy and sometimes make course corrections. For example, Natalie Lyman (Asian Studies: China Studies '23) experienced firsthand how vital an internship was to figuring out her future career. She participated in a local internship working with high school students creating and teaching foreign language curriculum. Lyman says, "I chose this experiential learning opportunity because it was in a career path I wanted to explore." She had the opportunity to design a course and adapt it to specific student needs. She also found that interacting with more experienced coworkers helped her learn how to work well with students.

Perhaps more importantly, Lyman's internship helped her realize she does not want to be a teacher. Now she can try new experiences to find what she wants to pursue. Internships, study abroad programs, and mentored research projects may seem like single stars that students pass by, but in conjunction with the core competencies, they act as constellations that guide students on their journeys.

## YOUR STAR MAP

The galaxy contains infinite destinations, but no matter where students choose to go after takeoff, they cannot get there without the experiences that help propel them toward their goals. Navigating life after college requires the competencies students develop as they participate in internships, study abroad programs, and mentored research. Each experience acts as a star that makes the night sky a little brighter and easier to navigate. Students' past experiences give them direction and help them arrive at a new planet where they can thrive. ■



Prior to the 1962 military regime's coup d'état, Myanmar (Burma) was home to one of Asia's most celebrated university systems. But universities were shut down under military rule, and education turned into rote memorization from textbooks. It reached the point where being a "good student" meant being able to recite memorized pages of facts and writings. When the military regime ended in 2011, a fully realized democratic government and a renewed availability of higher education appeared to be on the horizon. Talented young people, entrepreneurs, educators, and investors rushed into Myanmar to build the foundations of an emerging liberal democracy—that is, until February 2021 when yet another military coup took place, and access to liberal education came under full assault once more. This was a tremendous blow for both institutions of higher learning and their students, who seek to learn and promote critical thinking, social and political understanding, and self-understanding and self-actualization—all crucial to a thriving, progressive society.

# EDUCATION FOR GOOD

## *Challenges in Myanmar*

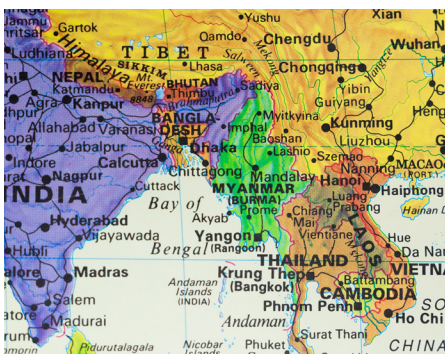
by Hanna J. Muhlestein (Interdisciplinary Humanities '23)

Parami University was founded in 2017 in Yangon, Myanmar, as a private, residential liberal arts education institution during the democratic window as a response to the lack of liberal education in the country. The university mission statement reads, "Parami University is committed to educating underserved students in developing countries so that they will become effective change agents and contributing members of the global community. Parami accomplishes this by nurturing critical thinking, inspired leadership, and compassionate service through globally competitive liberal arts and sciences education." Since the 2021 coup, educators operate remotely out of the United States, Europe, and Asia. According to BYU College of Humanities alumnus and friend of Parami University Kyle Anderson (Comparative Literature '05), they "deliver their entire curriculum virtually, thereby protecting students' identities and conversations and increasing opportunities for growth."

The university offers a bachelor of arts in philosophy, politics, and economics and a bachelor of arts in statistics and data science. Overall accreditation is forthcoming, but the university programs are licensed under the Higher Education Licensure Commission (HELC) of the District of Columbia in the United States, which is what allows the university to continue to pursue its mission.

Anderson spent the first part of his career as a humanities, Asian studies, and Chinese professor and a global education administrator. Now he primarily works behind the scenes supporting universities, experiential learning, and liberal arts programs as the vice president of strategic programming at Academic Programs International. He played a key role helping Parami University President Dr. Kyaw Moe Tun get the school up and running when it was just an institute.

Myanmar (formerly Burma) is a Southeast Asian nation of more than 100 ethnic groups, bordering India, Bangladesh, China, Laos and Thailand.







Old Bagan, Mandalay Region, Myanmar (Burma).

Every spring, Anderson teaches a Western humanities class at Parami with a focus on hospitality, where “students are challenged to compare Western classical ways of welcoming strangers to classical and contemporary ways in Myanmar.” Anderson encourages his students to fight through assignments that challenge and stretch their minds, just as they fight through the challenges of daily life, and to take the opportunity to reflect on life around them. In the current crisis though, learning and internet service can be spotty. “You get used to interruption, and you fight through it,” Anderson says. Sometimes education must be fought for, be it against poor infrastructure, poor care, or poor governance. Fighting through by virtual means is what Anderson and Parami University are calling their “crisis curriculum.”

*“Real threats to our pursuit of learning only strengthen the importance of liberal education.”*


Anderson says, “In recent decades in the US, we’ve been bombarded by the notion of ‘education in crisis’ or the ‘curriculum in crisis.’ By that we generally mean a loss of faith in and agreement upon what is being taught in American universities, what its purpose is, and why it is valuable. A ‘crisis curriculum,’ particularly in Myanmar, means exactly the opposite; it is the increase of faith in and sharpening of the content, purpose, value, and delivery of education in the context of dire political and social crises.

“Real threats to our pursuit of learning only strengthen the importance of liberal education,” Anderson continues. “At Parami, we adopt a student-centered approach that helps young men and women cultivate critical thinking, creativity, articulate communication, and

complex problem-solving skills that increase their autonomy and capacity to address challenges at home and abroad. There are few, if any, places in Myanmar where they can do that at present.”

Currently, all classwork occurs online and will for the foreseeable future; nevertheless, the university keeps class sizes small and prioritizes group collaboration and discussions, independent projects, and field studies. Parami University courses look very much like what one might find at BYU, including classes like Community Based Filmmaking, Human Rights Theory, and Science and the Universe. Parami University even promotes experiential learning opportunities in the students’ local communities.

President Russell M. Nelson said in a 1990 BYU devotional, “The critical difference between your just hoping for good things for mankind and your being able to do good things for mankind is education.”<sup>1</sup> As these Myanmar students advance their minds and reflect on the world around them, they “are deeply concerned about the state of their nation,” Anderson says.

“Some choose to be directly involved in public movements to combat injustices, while others choose to express themselves more privately.” Anderson explains that Parami University’s primary responsibility is to educate and support students so they can make informed decisions to help lead to a democratic future, a mission that became ever more important following the February 2021 coup. Anderson says that in the current political climate, “Parami University delivers a flexible, virtual curriculum based upon critical thinking and empathy that nurtures individuals’ hope and growth, preserves civil society, and develops change agents for a brighter, democratic future.” 

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Reflection and Resolution” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 7, 1990), 7, [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu).



# At the Intersection of Language Learning and Psychology

by Simon Laraway (Editing and Publishing '23)

**A research group at the English Language Center investigates how psychology mixes with language learning—and what effects this has on students of English.**

**A**ny language student is likely familiar with the feelings—frustration, stress, helplessness—that arise when hitting a snag while learning a language, especially in immersion environments. You think you have the target language down, but suddenly you find yourself ordering food and you forget how to say, “Hold the cheese.” Maybe the word for *Wednesday* slips your mind while making plans, leaving you awkwardly open mouthed. Maybe you have car problems and are unable to even begin to explain to the mechanic what is going on (hard enough in your native language!). These little stressors can build up, making language learners feel frustrated or, worse, want to throw in the towel.

Teachers at the English Language Center (ELC) have become increasingly aware of how these sorts of difficulties impact language learning. The ELC is a lab school connected to the Department of Linguistics that serves students who come to Provo to learn English, most of whom are from other countries. Students at the ELC have diverse needs and skill levels, but many students share a common sentiment: the process of moving to the US and learning English is no easy feat. “They are leaving their country, their family, their friends—everything they are familiar with,” says Carolee Rogers, TESOL MA graduate and teacher at the ELC. “It does add an extra level of stress.”

At the ELC, helping students navigate the stress and difficulties of learning English has become increasingly tied with pedagogy. This is thanks to the formation of a new research group involving language learning and psychology. Essentially, this group aims to uncover how language teachers can use interventions based on research in psychology to simultaneously promote well-being and aid in learning—two ends that go hand in hand. “Increasing the well-being of a student increases his or her ability and capacity to learn,” explains Ben McMurry, program coordinator of the ELC.

The research group, formed several years ago and continuing today, has produced MA theses and projects, undergraduate projects, and other research. “We’ve focused on two areas of the psychology of language learning: one is self-regulation and another is positive psychology,” McMurry says.

## RESEARCH IN SELF-REGULATION

Students’ ability to self-regulate—including setting goals, setting expectations for themselves, and monitoring themselves—is essential to helping them stay motivated in their language learning.

“It kind of all started with motivation,” says Maryann Phillips, a TESOL MA student who recently graduated. “You need motivation and things like that to learn a language because it can be really discouraging.”

To help students self-regulate and stay motivated in the language-learning process, several studies at the ELC have investigated how students can successfully implement short-term goal setting, particularly using a framework called WOOP. WOOP, which stands for Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, and Plan,<sup>1</sup> helps students recognize obstacles impeding their goals and plan to overcome them. “I worked on the application of WOOP in ESL classrooms as a way to increase ESL students’ self-regulation,” says Claudia Mencarelli, who graduated with a TESOL MA in April 2021. Finding the results promising, her research ended up turning into her thesis project.

Other studies in progress at the ELC suggest long-term benefits of this goal-setting framework. “We just finished two semesters of doing a research study on this,” McMurry says. “We’re still looking at the data. As part of another student’s MA thesis, we examined the effect of students using the WOOP framework over two semesters—something that we hadn’t previously done.”

For students facing obstacles to their proficiency (from lack of confidence to difficulty with language features to low motivation) researchers hope that this goal-setting framework will prove useful.

## POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

A feature of all language learning is that students must be exposed to input (i.e., listen and read) and produce output (i.e., speak and write) in the target language. New research approaches and curricula being developed in the ELC have implemented positive psychology topics combined with these tenets of language pedagogy. The idea is that by receiving input and producing output on positive psychology topics, students are more aware—consciously or not—of these principles in their lives. “We’re using the positive psychology input to

**“We’re using the positive psychology input to help them with life skills, such as gratitude, resilience, perseverance.”**





Students learning in the ELC classroom.

help them with life skills, such as gratitude, resilience, perseverance,” explains Rogers.

In a project spearheaded by Phillips, the group has produced a book of lessons that combines English teaching principles with these themes. For example, a lesson plan targeted to novice English speakers focuses on helping students learn formulaic language and memorized phrases when talking about or expressing gratitude. In the lesson, students are encouraged to call a loved one for whom they are grateful, express their gratitude, and reflect on the experience in the target language using set phrases in English. Tasks like these allow language learners to develop language skills while putting them in touch with their emotional and psychological state.

“Students found it a bit strange at the beginning, but as the term went on, I could see them opening up to the idea and finally embracing it,” Mencarelli says of the first time she implemented these lessons in the classroom. “There was a special mood in the class whenever we focused on those topics.”

Jessica Sousa, current TESOL MA student, has been working on an online textbook that explores similar themes for English learners but with a focus on reading skills. Her textbook provides readings gauged to different fluency levels and instructions for teachers on creating their own reading materials; the book is also open for additions. “I’m hoping other teachers continue to develop these lessons so they can use them in conjunction with listening and speaking lessons,” she says.

The group hopes the learning materials they create can be applied beyond the English language classroom in different contexts and with different subject matters. Sousa says, “I’ve started to pilot these lessons at the refugee center because the refugees have added challenges in their lives. My hope is that this can be something that can be really useful in other contexts beyond the classroom.”

#### THE IMPACT ON TEACHERS

The ELC provides a unique environment in which research like this can be conducted. As a lab school, it not only provides an environment where TESOL students can improve their teaching with real language learners, but students can also conduct research and pilot curricular innovations. As this research group is uncovering, helping learners maintain their mental well-being can be a crucial element in their language-learning journey.

At the same time, the research and teaching materials are being produced by students, who are themselves subject to the stress of school. “As a graduate student, of course, everything is really stressful,” Sousa confirms. But she attests that the positive psychology materials she is working with have indirectly benefitted her own mental well-being. “I’m making these materials for other people, but they’re also helping me.” Phillips agrees, “It has hopefully helped me to be more positive,” she says. “But if anything, it helped me be aware of positive psychology topics and subjects in my own life.”



# Learning and Teaching beyond the ELC

## TOEFL VERSUS LATS

BYU recently changed ELC students' application requirements in the hopes of reducing stress—in particular, the stress of taking costly standardized tests.

A good score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), a standardized English proficiency test, is one of the main requirements for admission of ELC students. But the TOEFL has some drawbacks—not the least of which is that it's expensive (roughly \$245 to take once).

"We've often felt like our institutional tests are much better than the TOEFL and other alternatives in terms of identifying if students are ready for university work," McMurtry says. Thanks to negotiations between BYU admissions and the ELC, a program is being piloted in which the ELC's own Language Acquisition Tests (LATs) are used as a free alternative to the costly TOEFL to meet admission requirements.



*Though the program is still being tested, initial results are positive. Read more about the program by scanning the QR code above.*

**The best way to prepare these missionaries to teach was to have them work with actual English learners.**


The ELC does more than just prepare non-native English speakers to enter English-speaking society—it also helps prepare teachers of English to teach wherever it might be necessary. Recently, thanks to collaboration between the ELC, the Department of Linguistics, and the MTC, missionaries have been able to gain a teaching and proselytizing foothold in an unlikely location: Mongolia.

The story begins in 2010, when MTC administrators realized a new way that missionaries could bless the lives of the Mongolian people. English teachers, they realized, were welcomed with open arms—whereas missionaries had begun to meet bureaucratic roadblocks to entering and proselytizing in the country. The solution was to kill two birds with one stone: missionaries would be certified to teach English so they could impart both language skills and doctrinal insights.

MTC administrators reached out to Professor Norman Evans (TESOL) and Professor Neil J. Anderson (TESOL) to see if they could help get missionaries certified as English teachers during their time at the MTC. Evans and Anderson agreed and immediately started creating a course that would turn new missionaries into English teachers with practical skills.

But acquiring these practical skills would not happen by studying pedagogy from a textbook. The best way to prepare these missionaries to teach was to have them work with actual English learners. The ELC provided a perfect environment to do this. Pretty soon the first batch of missionaries had completed the program and were able to enter Mongolia toting English teaching certificates and lesson plans.

With their newly acquired skills in English teaching, missionaries turned out to be a hot commodity. "A Mongolian medical school, for example, would like to sponsor many missionaries, but the government only allows four sponsorships per organization," Evans says.

Continuing to today, the 12-year-old program has awarded over 400 missionaries English teaching certificates. In addition to its benefits for Mongolians and the Church in Mongolia, "much good has also come to BYU faculty and students who have been involved," Evans says. 

1. Gabriele Oettingen is the leading researcher behind WOOP. To learn more about it, visit [woopmylife.org](http://woopmylife.org).



Students in a Mongolian medical school receive English lessons from missionaries trained at the ELC.

Photo courtesy of Professor Norman Evans



# Making BYU the Lord's University

MUSINGS UPON RETIREMENT

by David Eddington (Experimental Linguistics, Spanish Language)

The BYU community's continued dedication to Christ and His gospel builds a culture worthy of being called the Lord's university.





# Is BYU the Lord's university?

I have pondered this rhetorical question as my tenure at BYU ends, and this essay details experiences I have reflected on while attempting to answer the question. At times I have heard the question posed in jest or even voiced with intonation and body language that clearly indicated mockery. However, I have concluded that the real question is not institutional but rather individual: Are those who study, teach, and serve at BYU the Lord's people? The answer ultimately depends on the extent members of the BYU community follow the Savior and emulate His life and teachings.

The Lord's people should not be ashamed of gospel truths, which should be incorporated into and taught alongside secular knowledge. When I joined BYU in 2003, I was invited to make my courses spiritually strengthening. I wondered how professors of finance or construction management worked spiritual topics into their courses. How could I possibly incorporate any religious aspect into my own classes on acoustic phonetics or psycholinguistics? However, as I settled into my life at BYU, there were times I was prompted to share my gratitude for the Savior or a gospel principle in class, even though it was completely unrelated to the topic at hand. In those instances, I did not find out until the end of the semester, while reading student evaluations, that those three minutes of tangential gospel reference gave a few students a spiritual boost that they needed.

I soon learned that I could introduce gospel discussion through illustrations of the scientific method as the path to furthering knowledge of the physical world. The search for scientific truth could be easily expanded into discussions of how spiritual truths are discov-

ered. When examining the complexities of human language, the vocal apparatus, and the miraculous way in which children effortlessly learn a language, I often paused and pointed out the incredible complexity of speech and language, which, in my mind, evinces the existence of an intelligent designer. Not only was I unafraid to share gospel truths in class, but I relished the opportunities. This freedom of and interest in religious discussions among all areas of study can make BYU the Lord's university.

Some institutions of higher education believe and teach that science and religion are wholly incompatible, suggesting that, as people become more educated, their expanded knowledge naturally leads them to understand it is naïve to believe in God. However, a crucial part of a BYU education is daily student interaction with a host of staff and faculty members who serve as living examples that a belief in God and a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ are not undermined by their high educational attainment or their commitment to the scholarly enterprise. Some critics believe that BYU faculty work in an intellectually stifling environment. In my experience, the ability to freely integrate the secular and spiritual creates a wonderful opportunity for intellectual growth. Should the Lord's university provide anything less?

Once, while working at a state-sponsored university, I was directing a Spanish conversation course designed to prepare students for a study abroad program, and I planned a classroom activity in which students were asked to share a life experience that was particularly meaningful to them. One of the students in the class was a middle-aged woman who had come back later in life to finish her degree. When it was her turn to speak, she explained how her good husband had recently died and how much she missed him. At that moment, I detected the Spirit of the Lord prompting other students to express meaningful experiences that illustrated their thankfulness for their families—even at a secular university.

My first instinct was to identify the Spirit and ask the students what it was teaching them. I knew that most of the students were Christians and would probably not object, yet I realized that if I were to discuss religion or religious experience as an employee of a state-funded school, I could put my employment in jeopardy. I chose to let that





I am not only free but encouraged to incorporate discussion of both secular and spiritual truths in class.

powerful teaching moment silently pass. My freedom to discuss profound truth was stifled in that institution. In contrast, at BYU I am not only free but encouraged to incorporate discussions of both secular and spiritual truths in class, a characteristic of the Lord's university which for me has been liberating rather than constraining.

As a faculty member, I have participated in professional conferences at which attendees wear tags displaying their name on the first line and university affiliation on the second. My affiliation—Brigham Young University—may cause people to add a third, “invisible” line: **BELIEVER IN GOD**.

A banquet is often held on the last day of these conferences, and at one of these events I entered a ballroom full of set tables ready to be served. As I looked around the room, I caught sight of a woman vigorously motioning for me to join her. I was relieved to have an invitation to a table and recognized her as someone I had previously met in a different conference. She was very excited to talk to me. She asked if I remembered our conversation from the banquet at the previous conference. Four years had gone by, and I, frankly, did not. She informed me that we had sat together with a few other professors, some of whom, upon seeing that I belonged to Brigham Young University, challenged my beliefs and berated me for acknowledging the existence of God. Reminding me of that conversation was the source of her enthusiasm. She profusely thanked me for holding fast to my religious values and let me know that, because of my actions, she had decided to become a more faithful Catholic and no longer hide from her professional peers that she believed in God. The rest of the professors at the table, although atheists, joined us in a cordial discussion of religion during the remainder of the dinner. I came away feeling honored to carry Brigham Young University on my name tag and grateful for the opportunity to represent the Lord and His university.

While directing a study abroad program, I observed the power of my students' willingness to be examples of Christian living and representatives of the Lord's university. Our coach driver was an Irishman who got to know us as he spent two weeks hauling our group from site to site in Ireland and Wales. He was not a talkative man but did mention that, when he saw he was assigned a university group, he was less

than enthusiastic due to previous university groups he had dealt with. However, he quickly changed his mind as he observed the daily behavior of our BYU group. We were polite, modest, and clean. Our interactions with him and with each other were completely lacking in contentious or vulgar language. Of course, we started each day on the bus with a brief prayer. These students transported the spirit of the Y across the ocean and could not have been better ambassadors for their university, country, or Savior.

We said goodbye to the driver at Caernarfon Castle, part way through our trip, singing “God Be with You Till We Meet Again.” We received a message from him a few days later. In the message, he explained that he had lost his wife several years before and, in his grief, given up belief in God. He acknowledged that his belief in the Creator had been rekindled as the result of the time he spent with our BYU students. I believe this powerful, faith-defining Spirit is common of the people that make up BYU campus and thus allows it to become the Lord's campus.

I am convinced that it is not only the discussion of gospel truths in the classroom that makes the Lord pleased to accept BYU as His. BYU is the Lord's university to the extent that those who are associated with BYU demonstrate Christlike behavior. I am deeply grateful that my name has been associated with our university, as well as for the times that so many BYU people have been examples that would make the Lord pleased to call BYU His university. **H**





# A Humanities Approach to Education Week

by Lauren Walker (Communications: Public Relations '25)

Each August, BYU Campus Education Week offers hundreds of classes ranging from improving family relationships, parenting, and finding gospel insights to finances, technology, health care, and even automobile repair. The classes are organized and taught in a way that caters to all types of learners. These classes can be one-off, independent lectures, but they are sometimes recurring lecture series. Faculty members from the College of Humanities have recently become an integral part of Education Week, providing insightful and interesting humanities classes.

## HISTORY OF THE COLLEGE IN EDUCATION WEEK

Many College faculty members teach classes based on their own interests in humanities or gospel topics. For example, Professor Donald W. Parry (Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea Scrolls) has consistently lectured at Education Week, speaking about angels and symbolism in the temple. Adjunct Faculty Jane Hinckley (18th-Century British Women Writers and Artists) has also spoken many times on Jane Austen and her literary works. Adjunct Faculty Lori Steadman (Rhetoric and Composition) taught in 2022 on knowing and teaching family stories to help build a resilient family.

In addition to the many classes that College faculty organize and teach, the Humanities Center recently began sponsoring Education Week presentations. Professor Matthew Wickman (Scottish Literature), founding and former director of the Humanities Center, recognized the opportunity to provide greater access to the rich scholarship and educational perspectives of College faculty. To create a feeling of familiarity with the classes, Wickman and the Humanities Center created recurring, themed courses.

One of the most successful themed series is Finding Christ in the Humanities, a lecture series focused on appealing to religious interests. Many participants noted that the series helped them see Christ more frequently in unexpected places.

Additionally, the Humanities Center sponsors Five Best, a series highlighting niche interests like “Five Best Foreign Films,” or “Five Best Cartoons.” The initial lecture was so well attended, it became a popular, annual series at Education Week. Wickman explains, “These lectures appeal to the eclectic interests of both our faculty in the College and people attending Education Week. They were getting good audiences and great feedback, so we decided to keep going with them.”

Wickman also notes that the annual lecture series created excitement about the topics. “I’ve heard really good feedback from people who have attended and have either been moved by something that was said or that had new things they wanted to read as a result,” Wickman says. “I think it has increased the visibility and the accessibility of work being done by colleagues around the College.”

## FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE IN EDUCATION WEEK

As the new director of the Humanities Center, Professor Rex Nielson (Luso-Afro-Brazilian Literature and Culture) eagerly awaits the 2023 Education Week. “We have really high attendance at our panels,” he says. “And to me, those high levels of attendance are evidence that many members of the Church are hungry for the humanities and hungry for the way that the humanities help us think about the important issues of our lives.” The recent spike in attendance at humanities-related lectures led the Humanities Center to expand the number of faculty members participating in Education Week for 2023.

Not only do Education Week attendees pursue ongoing learning, but they sharpen skills learned from their time as students. Reflecting on his experiences with Education Week, Wickman says, “In a lot of ways, I imagine attendees come to reenter to learn and then are reminded of ways that they both went to serve after graduation but still serve, in part, through their experiences and education in the College.”

Nielson hopes Education Week attendees look forward to the year to come and assures that this year will be just as uplifting, applicable, and spiritually enlightening. “Our college is invested in helping us understand what it means to be a child of God on this planet” as we interact with and learn about other cultures. “I think we have a lot to offer Education Week.”

*The following two articles showcase presentations by College of Humanities faculty from Education Week in 2022.*

“OUR COLLEGE IS  
INVESTED IN HELPING US  
UNDERSTAND WHAT IT  
MEANS TO BE A CHILD OF  
GOD ON THIS PLANET.”





Photo by Brooklynn Jarvis Kelson/BYU Photo

## **JAMES SWENSEN: “WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: FIVE PHOTOGRAPHS THAT CAN CHANGE HOW WE SEE THE WORLD”**

by Simon Laraway (Editing and Publishing '23)

The average internet user is bombarded with tens of thousands of photographs every day. Exorbitant numbers float around about the number of images present in the digital age: Instagram users post 46,000 photos a minute, Facebook users upload 350 million photos a day, humans take a grand total of 1.72 trillion photos every year, and so on. This results in a paradox, according to Associate Professor James Swensen (History of Photography): “We are so inundated with photographic imagery that we don’t look.”

But photographs can be powerful. During a 2022 BYU Education Week lecture, Swensen explored cases where photographs quite literally changed the world.

The photograph shown on the following page—one of Swensen’s titular five photographs—is one of a number taken by Lewis Hine depicting child labor toward the end of the Industrial Revolution in the early 1900s. Hine was hired by the National Child Labor Committee to document child labor, a widespread phenomenon at the time. “He’s going to photograph these children,” Swensen said. “He’s going to bring their faces and their situations to light so that not only can they be seen but something can be done.”

Hine worked as a social studies teacher, but early in his career he took up photography to supplement his teaching. He soon recognized

the power that photography had, and he determined to use it to sway public opinion on child labor. As a child, Hine had to work to support his family, so he empathized deeply with the children he photographed. Swensen said, “He not only shows these young children, but he gives them a name. They are not just anonymous or unknown figures, but they are real people. He humanizes these young girls and young boys.”

Hine’s work was far from easy—often he would have to sneak into factories, avoiding factory foremen or supervisors who wanted to prevent images of child labor from circulating. But Hine’s efforts were duly rewarded. “Hine’s work actually moves the needle,” Swensen confirmed.

In fact, as a result of his photographs, the public and government could no longer turn a blind eye to the depravity of child labor. This led to laws against it during the Progressive reform movement, ultimately culminating in the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, in which the federal government outlawed child labor completely.





Lewis Wickes Hine. *Sadie Pfeiffer, a Cotton Mill Spinner, Lancaster, South Carolina, 1908.* The Art Institute of Chicago.

At that point, Swensen's discussion came sharply back to the present, where he critiqued current interactions with visual media. Hine's photography resulted in real and practical change. But little photography we see in our own lives seems to have such a profound effect—whether personally or societally. Our eyes tend to glaze over when we scroll through the deluge of social media photos and advertisements. How can we reform our relationship with photography to see it as the powerful tool and art form it is?

Swensen said the first step is to slow down and “consider the images that we are seeing. We blindly accept these things, but we should stop and think about what they are, where they are from, who made them, what kinds of choices went into those photographs. There are those handful that we should slow down and think about and scrutinize.”

**THE FIRST STEP IS  
TO SLOW DOWN AND  
“CONSIDER THE IMAGES  
THAT WE ARE SEEING.”**

We also ought to exercise some wariness in interacting with photographs and be slow to accept what they seem to depict as the truth. “They are not completely objective things,” Swensen said. “It behooves us to understand what photographs are, what they do, because we trust photographs.” Doctored images are becoming increasingly commonplace (and increasingly convincing) but that does not mean we are at the mercy of anyone with Photoshop. A little research can go a long way, Swensen said: “It’s good to do a little detective work,

to ask, ‘Is this really what it’s saying that it is?’”

Practicing this conscious interaction with such a commonplace media can affect not only how we see the world but how we participate in the world. “What I love about photography is that it not only helps us see but helps us act. It propels us to do something,” Swensen concluded.



Photo of Associate Professor James Swensen by BYU Photo

**Look for more great classes sponsored by the Humanities Center at BYU Education Week in August 2023.**

**Stream 1:** Deja que el Señor guíe tu vida [Let the Lord Guide Your Life]

**Stream 2:** Environmental Stewardship and the Humanities

**Stream 3:** My 5 Best

**Stream 4:** Christ in the Humanities

**Stream 5:** Understanding the Diversity of the Body of Christ



## JANE HINCKLEY: “INSPIRING 17TH-CENTURY WOMEN”

by Julie Irvine (Editing and Publishing '23)

“Each time a girl opens a book and reads a womanless history, she learns she is worth less.”<sup>1</sup>

During Education Week, Adjunct Faculty Jane Hinckley prefaced her lecture with this quote. Hinckley’s lecture focused on three women who changed the arts for future generations of female creators.

### AN ITALIAN PAINTER

Artemisia Gentileschi forever changed the trajectory of female artists’ careers. Gentileschi, daughter of Italian artist Orazio Gentileschi, was a Catholic baroque artist during the 17th century, a time when “young women were to stay inside, either at home or church, waiting for their fathers to arrange a marriage for them,” Hinckley explained. Instead of falling into a woman’s traditional role, Gentileschi learned to paint.

When Gentileschi was 17, she suffered rape by her tutor, artist Agostino Tassi. Gentileschi used her trauma to infuse emotion and action into her paintings of biblical women—depicting women accurately as strong heroes (*Judith Beheading Holofernes*) or victims (*Susanna and the Elders*) rather than timid subjects or temptresses as Gentileschi’s male counterparts often did. She became so successful that she was the first female artist in the Academy of the Arts of Drawing in Florence.



Artemisia Gentileschi. *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting (La Pittura)* c. 1638-9. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

Her paintings show that she “refused to allow Tassi to derail her desire to be a professional female painter,” Hinckley noted. “She redefined feminine virtue to mean strength—strength drawn from the stories of unconventional heroes in the scriptures.”

### AN AMERICAN POET

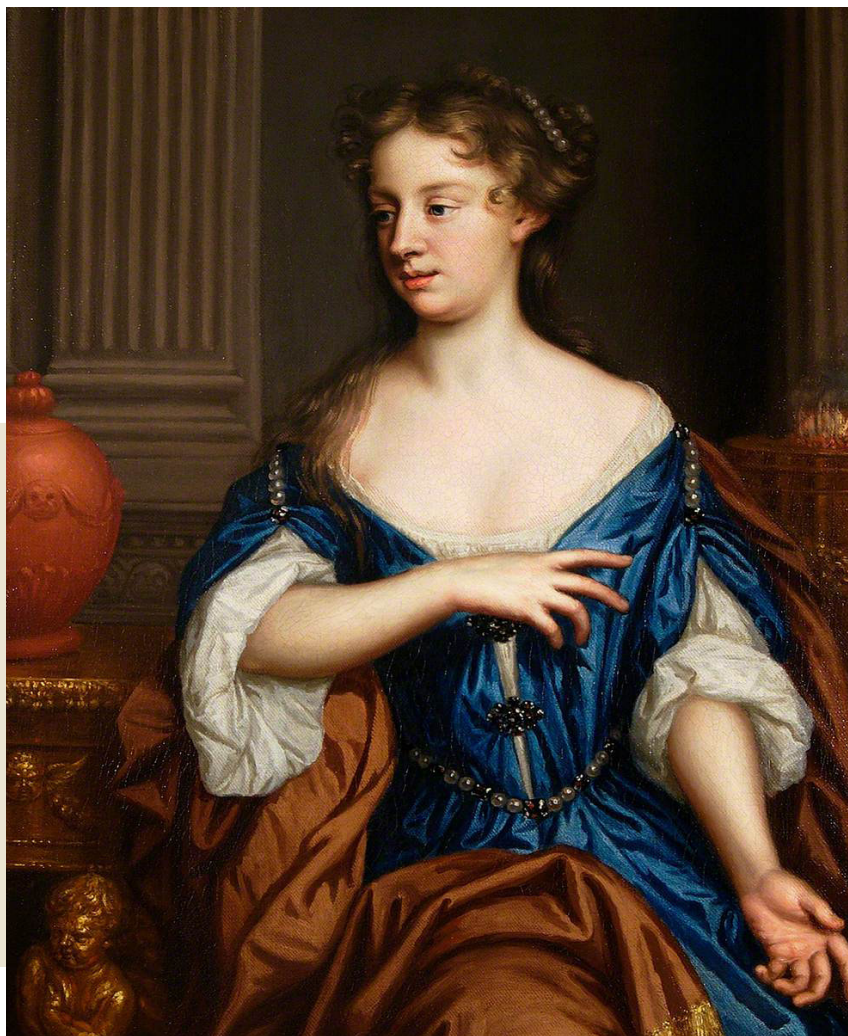
Anne Bradstreet (née Dudley) was an English-born American poet. As a young girl, she was taught history, literature, and poetry. Bradstreet married when she was 16 and, in 1630, left England with her husband and their families to establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Hinckley said, “Two years into her American experience, Anne contracted tuberculosis and came close to death. In gratitude for sparing her life, Anne turned to composing what previously she had only read and admired.” Anne wrote “Upon a Fit of Sickness” in 1632 (excerpt below).

*All men must die, and so must I;  
this cannot be revoked.  
For Adam's sake this word God spake  
when he so high provoked.  
Yet live I shall, this life's but small,  
in place of highest bliss,  
Where I shall have all I can crave,  
no life is like to this.  
For what's this but care and strife  
since first we came from womb?  
Our strength doth waste, our time doth haste,  
and then we go to th' tomb.  
O bubble blast, how long can'st last?  
that always art a breaking,  
No sooner blown, but dead and gone,  
ev'n as a word that's speaking.  
O whilst I live this grace me give,  
I doing good may be,  
Then death's arrest I shall count best,  
because it's Thy decree;  
Bestow much cost there's nothing lost,  
to make salvation sure,  
O great's the gain, though got with pain,  
comes by profession pure.*

Quoting author Charlotte Gordon, Hinckley added, “From 1638 to 1648, Anne wrote more than 6,000 lines of poetry, more than almost any other English writer on either side of the Atlantic composed in an entire lifetime. For most of this time, she was either pregnant, recovering from childbirth, or nursing an infant.”<sup>2</sup>





Mary Beale. *Self Portrait*, c. 1675. West Suffolk Heritage Service, CC BY-NC-ND.



Photo of Jane Hinckley by Jaren Hinckley

In 1647, Bradstreet's brother-in-law traveled back to England with a copy of her poetry and published her work three years later as *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America*. This collection made Bradstreet the first author, "male or female, published in the New World," Hinckley said. "I admire her bravery to do something that few women (and in America, very few men) were doing—namely, writing and publishing her poetry." Bradstreet was a pioneer for female poets and for working mothers.

#### AN ENGLISH PORTRAITIST

Mary Beale (née Cradock) was a talented artist and writer who balanced her career and family. She learned to paint at an early age from her father, a Puritan minister and amateur artist. When she was 17, she met and later married cloth merchant Charles Beale, another amateur artist. Soon after they married, Beale and her husband moved to London, where she began painting portraits of her family and friends.

Beale was also a writer, and she composed a manuscript on painting as well as poetry and other

writings. In her manuscript, *Observations by MB*, she discussed the techniques and materials she used to paint apricots. "This is the first known text in English to explain the practice of painting by a female artist and one of the earliest writings on the subject by either gender," Hinckley noted. The Beales then moved from London to Hampshire, where Beale wrote her treatise, *Discourse on Friendship*. She also contributed to Samuel Woodforde's *Paraphrase of the Psalms*.

After moving with her family back to London, Beale became the sole provider for her family. "She and Charles were this dream team of a married couple who were best friends, who cherished each other and worked together so that she could be the successful, first female portrait artist in England," Hinckley explained. Reflecting on Beale's contribution to art, Hinckley said, "In addition to her abilities as a painter, she was one of the first English portraitists to allow people to smile in their portraits." Beale's new take on the classic portrait helped her gracefully and successfully create a space for herself in typically male-dominated fields.

"The 17th century was, historically, and is, historiographically, a mess," Hinckley said, quoting author Jenny Wormald.<sup>3</sup> Hinckley continued, "It's within this messy time of the 17th century that women began to challenge or further challenge perceived notions of what women could or could not accomplish." Gentileschi, Bradstreet, and Beale were among those influential women who pushed boundaries and paved the way for future female artists and writers. ■

1. Myra Sadker and David Sadker. *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 13.
2. *Mistress Bradstreet: The Untold Life of America's First Poet* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2005), 195.
3. *The Seventeenth Century (Short Oxford History of the British Isles)* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.



# Faculty Book Recommendations

Looking for something to read?  
Try one of these timeless faculty favorites.



## Taylor-Grey Miller (Philosophy)

*A Grotesque in the Garden* by Hud Hudson

Hud Hudson's *A Grotesque in the Garden* is a story of two spiritual mistakes: a failure on the one hand to love God with one's whole self and, on the other, to love one's neighbor as oneself. These mistakes are bound up in the personal stories of the main characters, whose understanding of God and the intellectual challenges facing belief in or being in a relationship with God are inextricable from their personal stories (including their emotional and spiritual shortcomings).

The book is not only an accessible introduction to longstanding philosophical concerns about the nature of God—including the problem of evil, the possibility of divine deception, God's hiddenness, God's silence, and the nature of love—but it also illustrates ways in which an undue preoccupation with philosophical reasoning can make one vulnerable to spiritual ruin. If you want to begin seriously thinking about these deeply important issues, *A Grotesque in the Garden* is a wonderful place to start.

## Miriam Whiting (Linguistics)

*Seven Blessings: A Novel* by Ruchama King

I have reread *Seven Blessings* several times, and I always enjoy it. It takes place in an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem, and the vivid sensory details and engaging characters that the author includes do an excellent job of immersing the reader in the community. She also makes the faith of her central characters a real and vital part of their lives without her tone being preachy or cynical. I recommend this book for anybody who writes or wants to write about people of faith or for anybody who is interested in Jewish culture.

## Christopher Flood (French & Italian)

*The Accursed Kings (Les Rois maudits)* by Maurice Druon

Druon's seven-volume work of historical fiction is frequently described as the original *Game of Thrones*. The major difference is that in *The Accursed Kings*, Druon mixes well-researched historical fact with deliciously melodramatic fiction to recount a true story of medieval political intrigue. The author takes as his starting point and inspiration French King Philip IV's execution of the last grand master of the Knights Templar, Jacques de Molay. According to legend, Molay used his final breaths to curse the king and his posterity, as well as a few others he held responsible for the Templars' demise. The king died unexpectedly soon after, as did the others cursed by Molay. It is a fun read but too historically accurate and well written to be dismissed as simply a guilty pleasure.

## Valerie Hegstrom (Global Women's Studies)

*The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin

I love all of Ursula K. Le Guin's novels and stories. *The Left Hand of Darkness* moves me because of the self-sacrifice that one of the alien characters willingly makes on the chance that their sacrifice will result in communication between them and us (humans). I think when it appeared, critics read it as a metaphor about women living in an alien masculine world. I believe it also makes sense to recognize in the novel the kinds of struggles we might need to undertake to create understanding across other divides: race, ethnicity, social class, nationality, religion, and sexuality. ■



State of the Discipline:

# Asian and Near Eastern Languages

by Joshua J. Perkey (Manager of Digital Media and Communications)  
and Hanna J. Muhlestein (Interdisciplinary Humanities '23)



From top left counterclockwise: Seoul, South Korea; Petra, Jordan; Great Wall of China; BYU Jerusalem Center; Chureito Pagoda, Fujiyoshida, Japan



The Department of Asian & Near Eastern Languages teaches some of the most common yet challenging, as well as some of the most unusual, languages in the world.

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his article represents the fourth in our State of the Discipline series of articles featuring departments in the College. The first three (Comparative Arts & Letters, Fall 2021; English, Spring 2022; and Linguistics, Fall 2022) dealt primarily with the discipline itself.

Now we turn to our language departments, all of which focus on two or more specific languages and cultures but contain faculty whose specialties span many disciplines. In this issue we cover the Department of Asian & Near Eastern Languages (A&NEL). As its name suggests, the department includes major cultures and languages found in the Middle East and East Asia: Arabic and Hebrew from the former and Chinese, Korean, and Japanese from the latter. All but Hebrew offer majors, and all five have minors.

### A Diverse Department

Faculty in the department specialize in language pedagogy, linguistics, philology, culture, and literature. In addition, the department offers classes in ancient languages such as Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Egyptian. Put succinctly, the department is not just interesting and unusual but also one of the most diverse departments at BYU. The cultural diaspora of the five major languages, particularly Arabic and Chinese, has led to them being spoken in practically every major city in the world.

All the languages taught in the department—both ancient and modern—are extremely challenging to learn, and that creates its own level of complexity. For example, according to the Defense Language Institute, which ranks languages based on the time and effort required for native English speakers to gain high levels of proficiency, all languages in A&NEL are classified among the most difficult.

The very nature of that difficulty, both in terms of mastery and scholarship, unifies faculty despite the great differences between the cultures. Dean J. Scott Miller, who teaches Japanese literature

in the department, says, “Faculty in the department get along surprisingly well, considering how the cultures we teach have sometimes had periods of enmity between one another. We’re all studying very challenging, difficult fields and are deeply committed to very complex languages and cultures. Maybe that gives us respect for each other, because, since we all recognize the difficulty of one another’s languages and the challenges of mastering them, we can empathize, having gone through the difficult training to get to where we are.”

Part of that complexity stems from the nonalphabetic scripts used in all languages taught in the department. As Department Chair Richard McBride (Korean Studies, East Asian Buddhism) says, “Our department has been called the ‘Department of Inscrutable Scripts.’ Almost every other department of languages, except for Russian, uses Roman letters, but we teach over eight ‘funny’ scripts.” Such variety creates interesting challenges and adds flavor both to the department makeup and to the range of scholarship and teaching.

### Quiet Evolution

From the perspective of structural organization and language focus, the department may seem relatively unchanged from its founding in 1982 (see sidebar for an organizational history of the department). A&NEL still offers the five main languages and still provides courses for several area studies programs sponsored by the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies. And, like in the past, faculty are qualified to teach across a broad spectrum, not just in their primary disciplines. For example, Associate Professor Rachel Yu Liu (Chinese Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition) emphasizes modern pedagogy in her research, but she has taught almost every class offered in Chinese, from classical to modern.

The department is organized into four sections, each with its own faculty section head: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Near Eastern (incorporating Arabic, Hebrew, and the ancient Near Eastern languages). These sections help with administrative work as well as providing support to faculty and students.

In some ways, however, there have been remarkable changes. One of those is a dramatic increase and variation in student interest and enrollment in the languages offered by the department as well as a dynamic demographic evolution over the last two decades. Professor Matthew Christensen (Chinese), director of the Chinese Flagship Center, says that several factors influence the rising numbers, specifically

#### History of the Department

**1968:** The Department of Classical and Asian Languages created.

**1972:** The department was split into the Department of Classical, Biblical, and Middle Eastern Languages and the Department of Asian and Slavic Languages.

**1982:** The department was again reorganized and renamed as the Department of Asian & Near Eastern Languages.



“The study abroad programs . . . all help the students use languages in real life and acquire cultural literacy in the target language countries.”

#### 4 Majors:

- Arabic language
- Chinese
- Japanese
- Korean

#### 8 Minors:

- Arabic
- Chinese
- Chinese teaching
- Japanese
- Japanese teaching
- Korean
- Biblical Hebrew
- Modern Hebrew

#### FACULTY-SUPPORTED PROGRAMS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

- Comparative literature
- Linguistics
- Second Language Teaching (SLaT) MA
- International Cinema minor

#### FACULTY-SUPPORTED PROGRAMS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE KENNEDY CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

#### Majors

- Ancient Near Eastern studies:
- Hebrew Bible
- Asian studies:
- China studies,
- Japan studies,
- Korea studies
- Middle East studies/Arabic

#### Minors

- Ancient Near Eastern studies
- Middle East studies

economics, politics, increased online connections, and even the number of returned missionaries.

In the 1980s, Japan rose as an economic powerhouse, and enrollments in Japanese language courses rose. Then China began adopting and adapting some democratic economic principles and opening up to tourism. China quickly grew to match Japan as a world-economic player, and Chinese language enrollments increased. Japanese enrollments plateaued with its recession but have remained strong.

Prior to the last decade, most Chinese-speaking missionaries went to Hong Kong and Taiwan, learning traditional Chinese characters and language from a Cantonese or Taiwanese perspective. More recently, missionaries began learning Chinese in other locations, such as Singapore, California, New York, England, Australia, and Canada. Many of them do not have the same level of language reading and writing proficiency as those who serve in Hong Kong and Taiwan, so entry levels for a returned missionary represent a broader spectrum.

#### Political and Social Impact on Arabic and Hebrew

BYU has had a Middle Eastern studies area of emphasis since 1989, in part to support the educational experience at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. Faculty from several different colleges and departments helped teach there, and BYU began investing in developing Arabic and Hebrew faculty and coursework. “Most Arabic programs around the country had one faculty member; we had three,” says Professor Kirk Belnap (Arabic), director of the Arabic Flagship Center at BYU. Still, enrollments were not high.

Then came the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and “everything changed,” says Belnap. “Arabic became the flavor of the decade. There was enormous interest in Arabic studies. On the study abroad right before 9/11, we took 20 students to Damascus.” The study abroad programs paused for a few years after 9/11, but in 2004 they resumed with fervor, with 50 students attending to learn Arabic in Egypt.

“It’s unheard of,” Belnap says, for that many students studying to commit to “a full semester of study abroad who have already taken four classes.”

Numbers in Arabic have dropped a little over the last decade, but compared to other universities, they are still atypically high. During the fall 2022 semester, 41 students went to Morocco from 23 different majors, including Arabic, of course, but also biology, engineering, and music composition.

Although Hebrew maintains a strong teaching and student pool, enrollments have dropped somewhat over the last decade, following national trends and the closing of the Jerusalem Center due to COVID-19.

#### K-pop and Korea

Over the past decade or so, Korean student numbers have risen dramatically, mostly due to the rise in the popularity of Korean culture, particularly K-pop and other media. For example, between 2006 and 2016, the percentage of college students studying Korean nationally “rose by 95 percent,” says Associate Professor Julie Damron (Korean Linguistics and Pedagogy). “That is because of Korea’s online culture: their music, their social media, their dramas, things like that. Korean is getting a really large following among junior high and high school students who take it in college because they had no access to Korean in their high schools. Our classes follow that national trend; they’ve grown by about 90 percent.”

#### COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a profound effect on enrollment. For several years no missionaries were sent to Japan, Korea, or Taiwan, and fewer missionaries learned these languages in other countries. Study abroad programs halted, and professors could not provide students with the same higher-level learning experiences. This has decreased both the number of returned missionaries currently enrolled and the number of students who achieved higher proficiency from those study abroad programs.

Even though the pandemic decreased enrollments nationally and at BYU, enrollments at BYU are higher relative to the rest of the country. Christensen says, “Usually by the fourth year, other universities have around 6 students. We have closer to 20 or 30 students in a fourth-year literature or language class. That’s completely unheard of at most universities.”

Now that travel restrictions have been removed or reduced, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Arabic enrollments have begun to rise, including among students who did not learn the languages on their missions.



Professor of Arabic Kirk Belnap and students in Morocco.



## Dual Enrollment Classes

Another significant influence on Chinese students began in 2008, explains Liu, “when the Utah Dual Language Immersion program was created.” In 2020, twelve years later, students who had graduated from those classes began attending BYU. “These students are very good at speaking and listening,” Liu says, but their grammar skills do not match their speaking skills “because they learned the language in a more natural way, without much attention to grammar rules. With this more diverse student body, our program is facing a lot of new challenges. We have meetings every semester to talk about these challenges, and I think we need to adjust our curriculum design so that we can better help these students.”

## Pedagogical Approaches

Some students study A&NEL languages out of pure interest. For example, a student may take one or two courses in Hebrew to gain a better understanding of the Bible but not want to go any further. Other students come for more advanced training, such as majoring or minoring in the language or its affiliated area studies program. Still others want to achieve the highest levels of proficiency for business or academic pursuits.

Having students come from a variety of language training experiences—heritage learners (spoke the language in their home), true beginners, and returned missionaries—influences how teachers approach language pedagogy. Faculty are currently evaluating how to help newer students achieve the same level of speaking proficiency as returned missionaries, while at the same time helping returned missionaries strengthen grammar skills and diversify vocabulary. Department programs emphasize language proficiency *and* cultural content and literacy, often taught in English. Liu explains, “The study abroad programs in Japan, Korea, Jordan, China, Taiwan, and Morocco all help the students use languages in real life and acquire cultural literacy in the target language countries.”

Faculty are committed to students achieving high levels of proficiency associated with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) program. ACTFL is the governing body that deals with all foreign language teaching, from kindergarten all the way up to university levels. Christensen says, “They have a proficiency scale that goes from novice to superior, and we tie all our outcomes to these proficiency levels. A lot of traditional language programs treat foreign language study as an academic exercise, and we treat our languages as practical, functional skills that you could do something with when you graduate.”

Some faculty members have been participating in a special workshop run by the College of Humanities to help students articulate competencies they accrue in language classes. Damron says, “We are widening our view of what we want our students to be able to do when they leave with a humanities degree. They need to be able to verbalize the additional skills they’ve learned.” Liu says she wants her students to “think clearly, communicate effectively, and understand important ideas in their own cultural traditions and those of others. This is what we do to help them not just learn the language but also help them develop some lifelong skills that they can apply into their lives.”

The wide diversity of student experience coming into the classroom can create its own challenges. In the Korean courses, there can be up to 100 students in a class with no Korean background. Rather than let that be an impediment, Damron says, “We’re starting them on a path of lifelong learning, because to learn such a difficult language you have to be on that path. We have created opportunities for immersive experiences, and we strongly recommend our students, who’ve never been to Korea, to have some sort of immersive experience in the language by doing a direct enrollment, internship, study abroad program, or the foreign language house.”



Giza, Egypt.

Damron has also been experimenting in her Korean linguistics classes with creating exams that more closely resemble what graduates would encounter in real work environments. Instead of having students take lengthy exams on their own, students participate in “a four-day project. They work together in pairs to write their own exam. They spend two days writing an exam with access to all the books, the internet, everything. On the third day they take the test together. They have shared memory. They’re collaborating. They’re negotiating. They’re working together toward the end product.

“On the fourth day they get together with the other groups who wrote their test, and they give feedback on the test and their negotiated grade. And then we talk about how this group project prepared them for job interviews, working with teams, and graduate school.”

Professor Donald W. Parry (Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea Scrolls) explains that, over the last two decades, he and his colleagues in Hebrew have implemented a number of feedback-based changes, including nine new “digital tools and several hard copy resources to enhance learning of Biblical Hebrew, first year to advanced.” Further, they have made major changes to their Biblical and Modern Hebrew programs—including the way they teach classes and the resources they provide students—creating enhanced learning outcomes and improved exams. Parry shares an example: “For years we parsed Hebrew verbs by writing them on the whiteboard. This was very time consuming, and we perhaps parsed ten verbs in about ten minutes. But the Biblical Hebrew Learning Tool presents 3,000 verbs (electronically). We use that tool in class and can cover about 30 verbs in 10 minutes—three times more. That is an extraordinary improvement over using the whiteboard.”



## The Cambodian Oral History Project

The Khmer Rouge policy of genocide left a huge hole in family histories in Cambodia. Formally launched in January 2016, the Cambodian Oral History Project at BYU seeks to capture family stories in Cambodia by engaging local youth in the process. Youth and young adults in Cambodia interview family members to learn about their lives and stories. The project represents a broad partnership between BYU faculty, staff, and students and family history specialists, with the cooperation of local Cambodian leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## Research

Earlier we noted that most faculty in the department do not specialize in the same way that faculty might in other departments. That does not mean the faculty do not engage in intriguing research and impassioned projects. Miller says, “Perhaps because of the peripheral nature of our areas in the American academy, the department contains world specialists in a variety of disciplines who are softly camouflaged behind the façade of a normal language department. It is a very humbling place to work.”

BYU is well placed to offer scholars groundbreaking opportunities to do unique studies, especially on advanced language learning, because of the large number of bilingual students here. For example, the Language Immersion Student Residence (LISR) has provided a way for faculty members to evaluate very closely the way language is being used by non-heritage learners. Students who live in LISR housing pledge to speak their immersion language, greatly accelerating their language adoption. Associate Professor Steve Moody (Japanese Linguistics) and Assistant Professor Shin Tsuchiya (Japanese Language Acquisition) have observed some very interesting characteristics in the ways LISR students were using Japanese in ways that native speakers would not. These findings inspired a research project that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of language immersion programs. Tsuchiya and Moody use the term “abominable fluency” to describe missionaries and LISR students who are proficient enough to communicate but then create unnatural phrases in their target language. The results of this ongoing research help faculty improve language learning experiences for students.

## Chinese and Arabic Flagships

Two other major developments with national and international significance have occurred within the department: the establishment of the Chinese Flagship Program (2002) and the Arabic Flagship Program (2018).

Flagship programs are a partnership between the United States federal government, under the direction of its National Security Education Program, and institutions of higher education. Their goal is to help individuals attain exceptional professional language proficiency and cultural competency so they can be a benefit to the country, regardless of their chosen major. These programs go beyond informal or even academic training and prepare students at a professional level with superior proficiency. As with all flagship programs, students at BYU who participate may come from any major but must complete an intensive language program at BYU over four semesters of study, then participate in a year-long immersive study abroad program either in Morocco (Arabic) or Taiwan (Chinese).

Students have many options now as they study Arabic or Chinese, including majoring in the languages or becoming flagship certified. More students from BYU participate in and graduate from these advanced programs than any other university in the world. In the fall 2022 semester, for example, BYU sent 7 of the 21 students to the Arabic program in Morocco, a much higher percentage than any of the other five universities involved.

## The Historic Languages

A&NEL also teaches Aramaic, Ugaritic, Akkadian, Egyptian, and Coptic—some of the most historically valuable languages taught anywhere in the world. These ancient languages, along with a few others taught on demand, provide students with unique insights into the ancient world. The courses are limited to one semester each, with faculty members focusing on texts and skills.

Professor John Gee (Ancient Near Eastern Languages) teaches Ugaritic, Akkadian, Egyptian, and Coptic on a rotating basis so that each course is taught once every two years. Class sizes tend to be small—anywhere from 1 student to 10. Gee hopes that students will learn enough of the language that they can continue studying it on their own. Thus, he focuses first on vocabulary and grammar for a few weeks then quickly gets the students into real texts. But, he says, “I’m really teaching them how to survive being a disciple and scholar. We have a heavy emphasis on methodology, issues that the texts raise as well as teaching them the language and how scholars think, why they do some of the things they do, why that can create problems, and how the gospel fits into their work and their life.”



Mount Fuji, Japan.





Temple in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan.

### A Spiritually Strengthening Program

A unique feature of any program at BYU is the opportunity to learn by study *and* by faith—in other words, to invite the Spirit into the classroom and into the lives of the students.

The Korean section hosts an exchange program that brings together students from BYU and Kyung Hee University in Seoul. These students spend a semester at each university, and they often do the same in graduate school. Many of the students in the program become lifelong friends.

Damron says that the foreign students “see our students going to church every Sunday, participating in church activities on the weeknights, and going to the temple. Our students often bring some of their South Korean friends with them to church.” It has been a great way to promote the gospel and give spiritual insights as they attend church together and talk about religion.

This sort of spiritual connection can happen in any A&NEL class as the students learn a language and about other cultures simultaneously. Many of the courses facilitate discussions on topics such as morality, devotional practice, and other ideas about faith. In fact, faculty are encouraged to bring up the gospel, how it relates to their studies, and why it matters. Students often mention these positive experiences directly to faculty and in course surveys. As A&NEL students and faculty engage in their language studies and create space for spiritually confirming experiences, the work they do enhances both education and scholarship.

“The department contains world specialists in a variety of disciplines who are softly camouflaged behind the façade of a normal language department.”

AS ONE OF THE MOST UNUSUAL AND DIVERSE DEPARTMENTS AT BYU, the Department of Asian & Near Eastern Languages continues to thrive in the face of disparate challenges. Even as world economic and social trends cause fluctuations in student enrollments, the department has adapted in terms of organization, research, and pedagogical approaches. The result is a department unified by intellectually rigorous and challenging languages in an environment conducive to spiritual growth. It is as remarkable as its languages and research emphases are varied. ■



# College Updates



Associate Professor Bob Hudson lectures in his French class.

## 1 GENERAL EDUCATION PROFESSORSHIP

Associate Professor Bob Hudson (French Literature, Film, and Cuisine) was recently awarded the 2022 BYU General Education Professorship. This award recognizes outstanding professors teaching general courses. Hudson specializes in teaching French literature, art, culture, and French and Italian film general courses. In addition to teaching, Hudson was also nominated for his research and scholarship. He firmly believes in facilitating mentorship and encouraging his students to analyze French culture.

## 2 JAMES FAULCONER PHILOSOPHY CONFERENCE

Retiring professor James E. Faulconer was recently honored for his academic achievements in the College of Humanities at the Latter-day Saint Philosophical Theology Conference. The event ran from November 17 to 19, 2022, featuring philosophy lectures and tributes to Faulconer. Oxford professor Mark Wrathall gave the keynote address speaking on Faulconer's ideas of faith and belief. Other lectures honoring Faulconer included "Grounding, Trinitarianism, and the LDS Conception of God," "Obedience as a Principle of Practical Reason," and "The Book of the Weeping God."

## 3 BYU NATO CONFERENCE

From October 16 to 21, 2022, the NATO Bureau for International Language Coordination (BILC) held its Professional Development Seminar at BYU due to BYU's reputation as "the language university." Representatives from 25 countries attended the conference, hearing remarks from US senator Mitt Romney (English '71), Renata Forste (BYU international vice president), Dean J. Scott Miller (BYU College of Humanities), Irena Prpić Đurić (BILC chair), as well as presentations by 10 BYU professors and 22 representatives from attending countries that focused primarily on experience-based learning, motivating adult learners in a military environment, and assessing language proficiency in government and military positions. Associate Dean Ray Clifford noted the conference's importance as the first time ever that a BILC conference has been held on at a university campus, observing that "for these people, teaching language can be a matter of life or death."

## 4 TURNING THE ENGLISH DEGREE INTO A JOB

Many students graduating with an English degree worry whether they can get a good job after graduation. On Thursday, October 20, 2022, four alumni presented at the English at Work Panel on their career paths and how they use their English degrees in professional settings. Jennifer Egan writes stories for video games, most recently designing a narrative



English at Work panelists share their career journeys with an English degree.



for a Slytherin character inside a Harry Potter game. Michael Walton and his team manage promotional writing for Pluralsight by designing infographics, wording creative billboards, and writing advertisement scripts. McKelle George has authored many books, including the *Enola Holmes* graphic novel, and ghostwrote a number of others. Kristen Evans



NATO representatives highlight the importance of language learning at BILC Conference.

works as a product manager at Deseret Book, helping authors get from manuscript to polished product. The presenters inspired their audience to have confidence in their personal journey.

## 5 ACADEMIC RESEARCH MEETS MENTORING

Associate Professors Grant Eckstein (Second Language Writing), Jacob Rawlins (Editing and Publishing), and several undergraduate and graduate researchers presented their research findings on reporting verbs at the TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo in Pittsburgh. Writers use reporting verbs to introduce research from another author (like *stated*, *claimed*, and *found*). More recently, Eckstein, Rawlins, and their students presented at international conferences in Ireland; Flagstaff, Arizona; and Tampa, Florida. The group's published article on reporting verbs is the start of further research and publishing on both this topic and their larger focus of writing variation among academic disciplines. Rawlins explains, "Students bring a unique perspective and fresh eyes to the research—and a lot of energy and excitement as well."

## 6 EVOLUTION OF THE HUMANITIES


Professor Robert D. Newman, director of the National Humanities Center and former dean of the College of Humanities at the University of Utah, spoke at a Humanities Center Colloquium on September 12, 2022. He described how the humanities are most transformative when they "conjoin social and ecolog-

ical justice, as well as [being] a dynamic intersection between personal and societal transformation." Newman hoped that the humanities become an interdisciplinary and community-wide effort, joining with science to fight against climate change. "Saving democracy, saving civil society, saving the planet are all intimately intertwined with securing the future of the humanities," Newman concluded.

## 7 OFFICE OF BELONGING AWARD

Adjunct Faculty Michael Easterling (Interdisciplinary Humanities), a four-time Belonging nominee, was honored for his work in expanding belonging on campus at the Office of Belonging Honoree Dinner held November 30, 2022. A recent social media campaign sought to recognize exceptional students, faculty, and staff who facilitate a sense of belonging on campus. Easterling received the most votes out of any nominee in the campaign. "There's nothing special about me that makes me any better than anybody else. But there's absolutely something that I can learn from everybody if I open myself to them," he said.

## 8 RENAMING THE FAITH & IMAGINATION INSTITUTE

The Center for the Study of Christian Values in Literature has recently been renamed the Faith & Imagination Institute, coordinated by Ed Cutler (Critical Theory in Literature). The renaming highlights the institute's enhanced mission in light of shifting attitudes toward religion in literature and academia. The institute will continue to run the David O. McKay Essay Contest, publish the associated journal (*The Restored Gospel and Applied Christianity: Student Essays in Honor of President David O. McKay*), hold an annual symposium, and feature the Faith and Imagination podcast. 

### IN MEMORIAM

**Donald Ray Marshall** (November 25, 1934–October 25, 2022)

*Professor Emeritus of Humanities*

Don was born in Panguitch, Utah, one of seven children. He studied art at BYU and served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Tahiti. He also served in the US Army Reserves. Don later returned to BYU to earn his MA in English, then a PhD from the University of Connecticut in American literature. In 1971 he returned to BYU to teach humanities. He loved writing, painting, and watching films. His passion for the latter inspired him to lead BYU's International Cinema from 1975 until his retirement in 2000. Today the College of Humanities sponsors a faculty award in his name.

### CROSSWORD ANSWERS

**ART ACROSS** 1. *A-Team*, 6. Greco, 7. Aaron, 8. spire, 9. sent; **ART DOWN** 1. a gas, 2. traps, 3. eerie, 4. acorn, 5. Monet; **LITERATURE ACROSS** 1. Pisa, 5. genius, 7. attest, 8. Brontë, 9. sonnet, 10. learn; **LITERATURE DOWN** 1. petrol, 2. intone, 3. sienna, 4. Austen, 5. gabs, 6. stet; **LANGUAGE ACROSS** 1. haps, 5. parter, 7. abrade, 8. cloned, 9. sayers, 10. Ross; **LANGUAGE DOWN** 1. hablar, 2. arrow, 3. planes, 4. seders, 5. PACs, 6. Reds; **THEORY ACROSS** 1. BAS, 4. Maine, 6. Derrida, 8. net, 9. Dig, 10. athlete, 12. seals, 13. spy; **THEORY DOWN** 1. Barthes, 2. *A/n*, 3. snidely, 4. meets, 5. edits, 6. DNA, 7. Age, 11. lap



# The Simple Yet Profound Influence of a Master Teacher

by Thomas B. Griffith (Humanities '78)

Eugene England had the gift of truly teaching by study and by faith—in a way that transformed countless lives, including mine.



Photo of Eugene England by BYU Photo.

The year 2021 saw the publication of two excellent books about Eugene England, former professor of English at BYU: Terryl Givens' *Stretching the Heavens: The Life of Eugene England and the Crisis of Modern Mormonism* and Kristine Haglund's *Eugene England: A Mormon Liberal*. I cheer this renaissance of attention to a teacher who touched, shaped, and changed the lives of so many for the better, including mine.

I first met Gene England through his essays. In March 1975, I was away from BYU on my mission when Gene delivered his speech, "Great Books or True Religion?: Defining the Mormon Scholar." The resourceful Honors Program distributed his remarks in pamphlet form, which I read soon after my return to campus. Today, my dog-eared and marginalia-filled copy is wedged tightly between other tattered titles in the "Englandophile" section of my library. From that first encounter with Gene's writing, I read everything I could find that he wrote. I heard in his essays a voice that explained my dearest beliefs, spoke to my deepest concerns, and expressed my highest aspirations. His insights filled my lessons and talks (sometimes with proper attribution). The members of the ward over which I presided must have thought that I was of the view that Gene, along with C. S. Lewis, had been called into the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in a session of general conference they had missed. "Elder G. Eugene England." It fit, right down to the first initial in place of a name.

Because Gene only came to BYU after I had graduated and moved back to the Washington, DC, area, I first met him in person after I had become—unknown to him—his acolyte. It was the winter of 1995. I cashed in my frequent-flier miles accumulated with blood, sweat, and tears as a litigation partner at a law firm in DC and took my three oldest children, then in their teens, on a trip to Utah to see the sites, visit BYU, and introduce them to skiing. For the BYU portion of the trip, I allowed each to pick out a class to visit. I gave them free rein with one exception. They had to attend with me the class I picked: Early American Literature taught by Gene England. There, sitting among 30 or so BYU students in a classroom in the Joseph F. Smith Family Living Center, I introduced my children to the best of BYU. The discussion Gene led that day moved seamlessly from Hawthorne to Alma, back to Hawthorne, on to Paul, Joseph Smith, and Jeffrey R. Holland, then back again to Hawthorne. Academic freedom at its best. No artificial distinction between secular and sacred, heart and mind, reason and faith.

I could have left Gene's classroom that day feeling that the purpose of my trip had been achieved. I had shown my children the pursuit of knowledge at its best, by the best. What happened next exceeded my expectations. Gene invited us to meet him in his office to chat. Because his office would have been too small a space even had it not been filled with the clutter of books, papers, and articles, we moved to the faculty lounge. There, for the next hour, Gene directed the conversation not to me but to my teenage children. He understood what was happening here, what was at stake. Young lives, young hearts, young minds were being shaped and formed. For a great teacher, there are no ordinary moments. So I resisted the temptation to ask Gene the hundred questions I had in mind. Instead, I sat back and watched a great teacher talk to my children. I watched him model love, genuine interest, and empathy. At times I had to pinch myself. Here was the man most responsible for the fire of my adult faith and commitment to the Church teaching the children I loved more than life, and I knew that he knew what was at stake. It doesn't get any better than that.

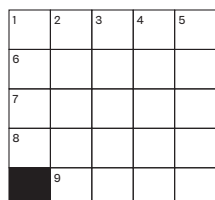
Only a few years later, I found myself back at BYU as its general counsel. Gene had moved on to Utah Valley University, but the acolyte sought out the leader. Gene found time to address a few of my hundred questions, and the day before he collapsed from the tumor that took him from us, I was in his home talking with him and his wife, Charlotte, about how best to carry out my new responsibilities as a campus stake president. "Emphasize the Savior, speak constantly of the Atonement, and teach that full engagement in the life of the ward is redemptive," he counseled. And I did. And the members of my stake heard much from Gene England (always with proper attribution). ■



# “Humaniminis”

by Corry Cropper (Associate Dean, French)

## ART



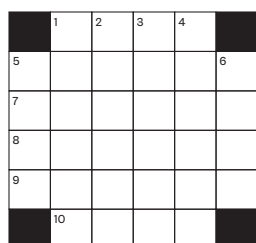
## ACROSS

- 1 *The* \_\_\_\_ (Mr. T series)
- 6 Renaissance artist, with “El”
- 7 Brother of Moses
- 8 Church topper
- 9 Email status

## DOWN

- 1 “Hey Siri, find \_\_\_\_ station near me.”
- 2 Word following lobster and sand
- 3 Spooky
- 4 Squirrel treasure
- 5 His painting *Impression, soleil levant* led Louis Leroy to ironically coin the term “Impressionism”

## LITERATURE



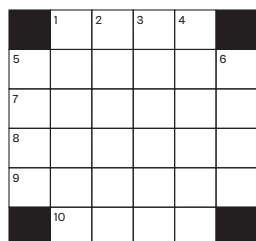
## ACROSS

- 1 City of leaning-tower fame
- 5 Word that can be a compliment or an ironic insult
- 7 Certify
- 8 Author of the unfinished novel, *Emma*
- 9 14-line poem perfected by Petrarch
- 10 What Jack Sprat could eat

## DOWN

- 1 Gas in Gloucester
- 2 Recite without inflection
- 3 Yellowish brown or a Toyota minivan
- 4 Author of the finished novel, *Emma*
- 5 Chatters
- 6 Copyeditor-speak for “don’t change”

## LANGUAGE



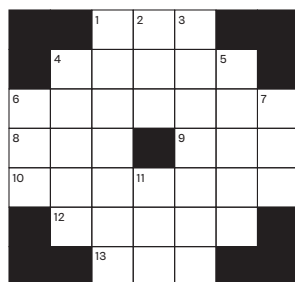
## ACROSS

- 1 Croatian: arrest (or occurrences, slangily)
- 5 French: to speak
- 7 Portuguese: hug
- 8 Genetically replicated
- 9 Suffix with sooth- (fortune tellers)
- 10 Flag designer Betsy

## DOWN

- 1 Spanish: to speak
- 2 Spanish: stream
- 3 Carpentry tools
- 4 Meals with matzo
- 5 “Super” orgs. active during political campaigns
- 6 Cincinnati MLBers

## THEORY



## ACROSS

- 1 Degs. offered in the College of Humanities
- 4 State known for lobsters
- 6 Deconstructor Jacques
- 8 Less than gross
- 9 \_\_\_\_ *Dug* (classic video game)
- 10 Olympic \_\_\_\_
- 12 Word following wax and Navy
- 13 CIA field agent, e.g.

## DOWN

- 1 Decoder Roland
- 2 NPR’s *Fresh* \_\_\_\_
- 3 Sarcastically
- 4 Swimmers’ competitions
- 5 Revises
- 6 \_\_\_\_ test (Ancestry.com offering)
- 7 Wharton novel, *The \_\_\_\_ of Innocence*
- 11 How Gideon’s chosen soldiers drink water in Judges 7

## BYU COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

**Dean**, J. Scott Miller,  
scott\_miller@byu.edu

**Associate Dean**, Grant H. Lundberg,  
grant\_lundberg@byu.edu

**Associate Dean**, Ray T. Clifford,  
rayc@byu.edu

**Associate Dean**, Leslee Thorne-Murphy,  
leslee\_thorne-murphy@byu.edu

**Associate Dean**, Corry Cropper,  
corry\_cropper@byu.edu

**College Controller and Assistant Dean**,  
Jared D. Christensen,  
jared\_christensen@byu.edu

**Liberal Arts Advisement & Careers  
Director and Assistant Dean**,  
Sherami Jara, sherami.jara@byu.edu

**Manager of Digital Media and  
Communications**, Joshua J. Perkey,  
josh.perkey@byu.edu

## ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

**Asian & Near Eastern Languages**, Richard  
McBride II,  
richard\_mcbride@byu.edu

**Comparative Arts & Letters**,  
Kerry Soper, kerry\_soper@byu.edu

**English**, Lance Larsen,  
lance\_larsen@byu.edu

**French & Italian**, Daryl Lee, dlee@byu.edu

**German & Russian**, Jennifer Bown,  
jennifer\_bown@byu.edu

**Linguistics**, Dan Dewey,  
ddewey@byu.edu

**Philosophy**, David Jensen,  
davidj@byu.edu

**Spanish & Portuguese**, Jeff Turley,  
jeffrey\_turley@byu.edu

## DIRECTORS AND COORDINATORS OF ACADEMIC CENTERS AND PROGRAMS

**American Studies**, Jamin Rowan,  
jamin\_rowan@byu.edu

**Asian Studies**, Marc Yamada,  
my@byu.edu

**Center for Language Studies**,  
Ray T. Clifford, rayc@byu.edu

**Chinese Flagship Center**,  
Matthew B. Christensen,  
matthew\_christensen@byu.edu

**English Language Center**, Ben McMurry,  
ben\_mcmurry@byu.edu

**Ancient Near Eastern Studies**,  
Cecilia Peek, cecilia\_peek@byu.edu

**European Studies**, Heather Belnap,  
heather\_belnap@byu.edu

**Global Women’s Studies**,  
Valerie Hegstrom,  
valerie\_hegstrom@byu.edu

**Humanities Center**, Rex Nielson,  
rex\_nielson@byu.edu

**Office of Digital Humanities**,  
Michael Call,  
michael\_j\_call@byu.edu

**Faith & Imagination Institute**, Ed Cutler,  
ed\_cutler@byu.edu

Check your answers on page 31.





COVER: Hiroshi Yoshida. *Eight Scenes of Cherry Blossoms: Spring Rain (Sakura hachidai: Harusame)*, 1935. The Cleveland Museum of Art. Back cover copy by Simon Laraway (Editing and Publishing '23).

If you visit Japan in late March or early April, you may find yourself in a world awash with pale pink flower petals. The beautiful cherry blossoms attract tourists and locals alike, but anyone hoping to see them must time his or her trip wisely. The blooming season is short, lasting only about two weeks.

Japanese painter Hiroshi Yoshida (1876–1950), like many artists, explored this transient but picturesque motif in his art. Our cover image, a woodblock print from his series *Eight Scenes of Cherry Blossoms* (1935), adds another dimension to the ephemerality of the flower petals—puddles on the ground reflect a warped image of the pink-petaled tree. The rain seems to have subsided. Soon the puddles will disappear, absorbing into the ground or evaporating into the air. Soon after, the trees will shed their petals.

In the humanities, we generally tend to be less concerned with short-lived phenomena and more attracted to that which endures. We often occupy ourselves by studying cultural artifacts and topics that have stood the test of time, such as ancient philosophy, classical art, and historical literature. As Professor Marc Yamada (East Asian Film) discusses in this issue's Perspective, we are fascinated with

how the passage of time can imbue an object with greater character and beauty. But what about other, more fleeting, things that make our lives rich, like the seasonal flower petals?

In addition to exploring the enduring features we love about the humanities, this issue touches on the ephemeral: from hot technological fads (like generative AI) to art that is meant to be destroyed to brand-new innovations in pedagogy, we examine how the humanities can also thrive in a world in flux.