

# Humanities News



From left to right: Alex Bills, Caleb Dewey, Dr. Ahmad Karout, Joseph Yanchar, and Jonah Phillips at the fourth annual U.S. Universities Arabic Debating Championship

## AWARD-WINNING FACULTY BOOK

The John Whitmer Historical Association, a scholarly society dedicated to encouraging interest in Latter Day Saint history, presented a prestigious award to Assistant Professor Christopher Blythe (Folklore, Latter-day Saint Literature). He won the Best Anthology Award for his book *Open Canon: Scriptures of the Latter Day Saint Tradition*. Blythe co-authored the book with archivist Jay Burton, and their work explores the scriptural canons of different Latter Day Saint denominations.

## GO COUGS! VIVA COUGS! 加油 COUGS!

Beginning in 2021, BYU Alumni Services has sponsored tailgate events at away football games to connect with BYU alumni and fans outside of Utah Valley. During the fall 2023 football season, for the first time, representatives from the College of Humanities participated in the tailgate events, meeting fans and alumni and taking part in the service projects sponsored by Alumni Services at the events. College reps attended the BYU vs. Kansas game on September 23, 2023, and the BYU vs. Texas game on October 28, 2023. The events allowed the College to interact with approximately 500 and 800 fans, respectively. Josh Perkey, manager of the Digital Media and Communications team for the College, says, “We were pleasantly surprised at how many fans came to see us and how excited they were by how we taught them to say ‘Go Cougs!’ in foreign languages. They were very enthusiastic.” The service projects (a book drive in Lawrence, Kansas, and a holiday toy drive in Austin, Texas) helped the College and university create a positive impact in these communities.

## ARABIC DEBATING CHAMPIONS

On October 13–15, 2023, a team of four students represented BYU at the fourth annual U.S. Universities Arabic Debating Championship, held at the University of Utah. Caleb Dewey (Middle East Studies/Arabic '25), Jonah Phillips (International Relations, Arabic Language '23), Alex Bills (Russian, Middle East Studies/Arabic '24), and Joseph Yanchar (Microbiology, Arabic Language '25) competed in several rounds of debates, speaking exclusively in Arabic as they presented arguments about various political and cultural issues. The BYU team qualified for the semifinal round, and they won the award for best non-native speaking team. Jonah Phillips won fifth place overall in the open category of both native and non-native speakers, and Caleb Dewey won third place in the category of non-native speakers. Experiential learning opportunities provided by the College of Humanities made much of this possible.



The “Go Cougs” lanyard made for the tailgate events

## HUMANITIES CENTER HOSTS NATIONAL YOUTH STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

The BYU Humanities Center hosted the National Youth Storytelling Festival on September 5 and 6, 2023. The National Youth Storytelling organization has a unique mission to “strengthen storytelling by promoting and teaching the art of story among young tellers.” To that end, the organization annually selects several children, elementary through high school age, to learn about the art of storytelling and perform at the National Youth Storytelling Festival. In 2023, nine “tellers” performed memorized short stories at BYU, incorporating gestures, voice inflection, and even musical instruments into their performances. Following the showcase, the audience at BYU engaged in a conversation about the importance of stories as a form of human connection. National Youth Storytelling showcase guru Ginger Parkinson put it simply: “Storytelling is the best part of the humanities.”



## NEW COLLEGE AND DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP

In July 2023, Professor Deborah Dean (English Education) became the new chair of the Department of English, replacing outgoing chair Professor Lance Larsen (Poetry, American Literature). Additionally, Professor Scott Alvord (Spanish Linguistics and Phonology) became chair of the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, replacing Professor Jeffrey Turley (Hispanic Linguistics, Medieval Literature). Earlier in the year, in May 2023, the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies welcomed College of Humanities Professor Rob McFarland (European Reception of America) as the new faculty coordinator of the European Studies program, replacing Professor Heather Belnap (Franco-American Transatlanticism). In September 2023, the College established a Language Sciences Laboratory, which serves as the principal site for language sciences research at BYU, and named Associate Professor Troy Cox (Language Learning and Assessment) as its coordinator.

## BYU JOINS THE MLA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

The College recently accepted an invitation from the Modern Language Association to join their new Strategic Partnership Network, demonstrating BYU’s respected status and impressive commitment to the humanities. Membership in the MLA Strategic Partnership Network provides College faculty with access to useful databases and directories and other valuable benefits. This new partnership fulfills one of BYU’s strategic objectives, which aims to enhance the university’s position as a leader in languages and other areas that are central to the Church’s purposes. Humanities Center Director Rex Nielson says, “This partnership with the MLA both symbolizes BYU’s established excellence in the study of language and literature while providing our faculty and students with new resources to continue to their work.”

## PROFESSORS ATTEND NATIONAL HUMANITIES CENTER SUMMER FELLOWSHIP

In June of 2023, for the first time ever, BYU faculty members attended the month-long Residential Fellowship Program at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. BYU is an institutional sponsor of the National Humanities Center, which, according to its website, “provides scholars with an environment and resources conducive to generating new knowledge and furthering understanding of the human experience.” The attending professors were Associate Professors Sara Phenix (19th-Century French Literature and History), Jacob Rawlins (Applied Rhetoric, History of Publishing), and Dawan Coombs (Adolescent Literacy and Struggling Readers). They spent their fellowship time working on individual research projects and networking with other humanities scholars. The College of Humanities hopes to continue sending scholars in the future.

ACROSS  
1. Alp, 4. Glib, 8. Sap, 11. Foo, 12. Year, 13. Tse,  
14. Look Ma No Hans, 17. Asian, 18. Tenet, 19. Tesla,  
20. Hydro, 21. Same, 24. OSU, 27. Thor, 28. QBS,  
31. Je ne sais quoi, 34. Slot, 35. Ueys, 36. Escargot,  
41. CPU, 43. Acne, 44. Amo, 47. Oaf, 48. Blam, 49. Lax  
DOWN  
1. A flat, 2. Loose, 3. Pools, 4. Gymnasts, 5. Lea, 6. Jan,  
7. Brothers, 8. Stand, 9. Asner, 10. Pestoi, 15. Kal, 16.  
Hey, 22. Aha, 23. Moi, 24. OJs, 25. Sel, 26. Un Oenf,  
28. Que tal, 29. Boy, 30. Sis, 32. ETS, 33. Quo, 37. Cab,  
38. ACL, 39. RNA, 40. Gem, 41. CO, 42. Pa, 45. Ma,  
46. OX