

Canvas & Page



CENTER FOR
THE ARTS
AND HUMANITIES

Colby

Year In Review

2024-2025



James Taylor (Colby College) shares his newest research at the 2024 Summer Institute in Environmental Humanities.

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Kenzie Burns '26 re-shelves books at her CAH summer internship with the Waterville Public Library.

Front and back cover images by 2025 SIEH Fellow Rae Kuruhara.



Our Mission, Your Big Ideas

Director's Note

Reflecting on this past year, I am struck by how much the humanities continue to offer us, especially in moments of uncertainty. While it has been easy to focus on the many challenges we've faced, our programming, community engagement, and shared work at the Colby Center for the Arts and Humanities have offered alternative ways of seeing, thinking, and being together. Through it all,

I've been reminded of a central lesson from our humanities theme of *Play*: that play is not frivolous. It is a serious and necessary mode of experimentation, transformation, and joy. It disrupts, it builds, and it connects. I have found that to be particularly resonant this year.

Our 2024–25 humanities theme continued to explore the power of play in public life, from the kinetic movement of hip-hop dance to economic game theory, from environmentalism in video games to the liberatory practice of Black girls' play. These conversations,

performances, and lectures didn't shy away from difficulty. Instead, they insisted that play offers us a way through it.

This spring, our student advisory board chairs Nate Dunn '27 and Hunter Mawn '27 traveled to Washington, DC, to advocate for federal funding for the humanities. Meeting with Senators and staffers, they spoke about the transformative role the humanities play in their education and in their lives. Their advocacy took on new urgency as subsequent funding threats to the National Endowment for the Humanities reminded us of how fragile this support can be. Still, their dedication, knowledge, and passion reminded me of what makes the Colby student body so special: an enduring belief in connection, creativity, and community.

One of the year's most joyful moments was beloved author and video essayist John Green's visit to campus. The weeks leading up to his arrival were full of excitement. Our partners at the Waterville Public Library offered community reading groups and bookend-making workshops; Waterville Creates hosted a hands-on exhibition; the Maine Film Center screened *The Fault in Our Stars*; and Colby students led campus-wide reading circles. In conversation with Associate Professor of English Sarah Braunstein and student SAB Chair Nate Dunn, Green spoke movingly about failure, storytelling, and connection in difficult times. His visit reminded us that the arts and humanities can rekindle a sense of shared purpose and hope.

Looking ahead, next year's humanities theme of *Islands* offers a timely opportunity to think together about questions of insularity and connection. While isolation continues to shape so much of our daily life, the idea of the archipelago - the ties and solidarities between seemingly disparate places and people -

invites us to see the world not in terms of separation but of relations to one another.

As always, I am grateful to the faculty, staff, students, alumni, community members, and donors who make this work possible. Your energy sustains us. I look forward to the year ahead and to building more and better, together.



B. Dean Allbritton

Dean Allbritton, Director

Mission Statement

The Center for the Arts and Humanities at Colby College inspires creativity, critical thinking, and cultural understanding, celebrating the arts and humanities as vital to understanding the world and enriching lives. In collaboration with our Waterville friends and neighbors, we offer programs for all ages and backgrounds, creating a welcoming space where students, faculty, and the community connect and collaborate. Through themes, hands-on projects, internships, and events, we provide opportunities for learning, discussion, and artistic expression. By inviting everyone to explore the transformative power of the arts and humanities, we nurture a vibrant community where personal growth and collective enrichment thrive.

By the numbers:

In 2024 - 25,
the CAH
supported:

\$23,860	in student funding
43	events
20	theme and lab courses



Our annual fall seminar series on the humanities theme highlighted the best of play, exploring an array of topics like the joyfulness of poetry, game theory in class and life, Black users in digital gaming, and the philosophical merging of hip-hop and tech. The seminar laughed, moved, and thought together about what play looks like even in dark times.

A host of courses thought about play from a range of disciplines and perspectives, each contributing to a mosaic of discovery. Students had conversations about (and played!) Indigenous games in intermediate Spanish, explored the puzzles and paradoxes of philosophy, discussed sport and society in Germany, and so much more. They acted together in Performance, Theater, and Dance, honed their writing skills in Creative Writing, and learned about the world of musical games.

A highlight of the year was John Green's visit, which brought students and community members together around storytelling and hope, and the necessity of both of these things.



Play

Play is a term that spans a gamut of endeavors in the liberal arts without resolving the tensions. Bounding and bouncing across diverse histories and geographies, play connects action and rest, pleasure and exhaustion, young and old, human and nonhuman, and intellect and whimsy. This two-year theme (23-24 and 24-25) invites the campus and its community partners to explore, embody, and enact the complications of the theme. Engaging playful paradoxes as well as the inequalities that surround the theme, we ask: Is it work to intellectualize play? How and when is playing around seen as a subversive and even dangerous act? Who gets to play, and who doesn't? Play, as practice and concept, challenges the demands of intellectual rigor, offering possibilities for haptic engagement, queer curiosities, happenings and actions, and fun.



Play

*Humanities Theme
2023-2025*



<p>PRINTMAKING AND PLAY: EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY IN CREATIVE PRACTICE</p> <p>AMANDA LILLESTON Assistant Professor of Art Colby College</p> <p>MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 7:00PM DIAMOND 122</p> <p><small>The seminar series is sponsored by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, with co-sponsorship from the Departments of American Studies, Art, Cinema Studies, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Government, Philosophy, Spanish, Science, Technology, and Society, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Latin American Studies program.</small></p>	<p>PLAY LIKE AN ENVIRONMENTALIST</p> <p>ALENDIA CHANG Associate Professor in Film and Media Studies University of California, Santa Barbara</p> <p>MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 7:00PM DIAMOND 122</p> <p><small>The seminar series is sponsored by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, with co-sponsorship from the Departments of American Studies, Art, Cinema Studies, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Government, Philosophy, Spanish, Science, Technology, and Society, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Latin American Studies program.</small></p>
<p>LAS RARAS: THE NEW GOTHIC LATINA TROPE IN US POPULAR MEDIA</p> <p>LAURA FERNÁNDEZ Assistant Professor of Latinx Studies University of Richmond</p> <p>MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 7:00PM DIAMOND 122</p> <p><small>The seminar series is sponsored by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, with co-sponsorship from the Departments of American Studies, Art, Cinema Studies, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Government, Philosophy, Spanish, Science, Technology, and Society, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Latin American Studies program.</small></p>	<p>MODELS AND INSIGHTS FROM GAME THEORY</p> <p>TIM HUBBARD Professor of Economics Colby College</p> <p>MONDAY, OCTOBER 21 7:00PM DIAMOND 122</p> <p><small>The seminar series is sponsored by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, with co-sponsorship from the Departments of American Studies, Art, Cinema Studies, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Government, Philosophy, Spanish, Science, Technology, and Society, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Latin American Studies program.</small></p>
<p>DESIGNING BLACKNESS IN DIGITAL GAMING</p> <p>DR. KISHONNA L. GRAY Professor of Racial Justice and Technology University of Michigan</p> <p>MONDAY, OCTOBER 28 7:00PM DIAMOND 122</p> <p><small>The seminar series is sponsored by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, with co-sponsorship from the Departments of American Studies, Art, Cinema Studies, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Government, Philosophy, Spanish, Science, Technology, and Society, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Latin American Studies program.</small></p>	<p>LANGUAGE, SPECTACLE AND CHAOS! A WORKSHOP ON EMBRACING WORD PLAY AND FUN TO ENTER THE PAGE</p> <p>NOOR HINDI Palestinian-American Poet and Reporter</p> <p>MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4 7:00PM DIAMOND 122</p> <p><small>The seminar series is sponsored by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, with co-sponsorship from the Departments of American Studies, Art, Cinema Studies, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Government, Philosophy, Spanish, Science, Technology, and Society, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Latin American Studies program.</small></p>
<p>PLAYING TO TRANSGRESS: BLACK GIRLS' PLAYDATE AS A PRAXIS OF LIBERATION</p> <p>SONYA DONALDSON Assistant Professor of African-American Studies Colby College</p> <p>MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11 7:00PM DIAMOND 122</p> <p><small>The seminar series is sponsored by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, with co-sponsorship from the Departments of American Studies, Art, Cinema Studies, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Government, Philosophy, Spanish, Science, Technology, and Society, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Latin American Studies program.</small></p>	<p>DANCE-MACHINES</p> <p>BEN BAKER Assistant Professor of Philosophy Colby College</p> <p>MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18 7:00PM DIAMOND 122</p> <p><small>The seminar series is sponsored by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, with co-sponsorship from the Departments of American Studies, Art, Cinema Studies, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Global Studies, Government, Philosophy, Spanish, Science, Technology, and Society, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Latin American Studies program.</small></p>



Student art creation at *Roll Out*, a public celebration of art and printmaking organized by Assistant Professor of Art Amanda Lilleston. Lilleston was a CAH Faculty Fellow in 2024-25.



'We Will Shape the Story Together'

By Abigail Curtis

A chilly springtime downpour couldn't dampen the hum of excitement in Lorimer Chapel April 15 as hundreds of students, community members, and fans from far afield gave an audible cheer of welcome to acclaimed author and digital creator John Green. The conversation and question-and-answer period with the writer was this year's keynote event for the Center for the Arts and Humanities and the culmination of a two-year humanities theme of "play." Green, a funny, quick-witted speaker whose words and works are undergirded by a thick vein of humanism, touched on topics as diverse as his writing process, the importance of play, and how creating art and building community can help people survive difficult times. That last thought clearly resonated with the audience, who sat in silence for a moment to absorb what he said before erupting into applause. "It's so easy to feel like this is the end of the story. And I don't blame you if you feel like this is the end of the story, like, the human story," Green said. "This is, in fact, the middle of the story, and together we are going to invent a different end. I don't know what the end will be, but we will shape the story together. And that is itself, I think, an act of hope—to remember that this is the middle of the story and it falls to us, together, to write a different and better end for ourselves and for each other."

Understanding the humanities through the idea of play

In a sense, many of the students who attended the event have grown up with Green, whose books for young-adult readers feature smart, relatable protagonists, sometimes-heartbreaking storylines, and lend themselves to multiple rereadings. He has written the New York Times bestsellers *Looking for Alaska*, *An Abundance of Katherines*, *Paper Towns*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, which was adapted into a blockbuster movie in 2014, *Turtles All the Way Down*, *The Anthropocene Reviewed*, and the new book *Everything is Tuberculosis*. He and his brother, Hank Green, are the co-creators of the Vlogbrothers video blog channel and the educational series Crash Course on YouTube, which has millions of subscribers and viewers, including lots of the folks who came to Lorimer Chapel. Green's conversation at Colby was part of the Center for the Arts and Humanities' "play" theme. The center was founded more than a decade ago as a way to return the humanities to the heart of a liberal arts education, even as colleges and universities around the country were seeing dwindling interest in core humanistic subjects such as English, foreign languages, philosophy, and history. The themes serve as a way to unite the campus around a central idea that has to do with humanistic inquiry, with previous themes including Food for Thought, Freedom and Captivity, Boundaries and Margins, and Energy/Exhaustion. Next up will be *Islands*, according to Dean Allbritton, associate professor of Spanish and director of the Center for the Arts and Humanities, who introduced Green. For months, students have participated in a John Green book club, reading and holding lively discussions about his books. There was also the John Green Countdown, a series of community events held in conjunction with Waterville Creates, the Maine Film Center, and the Waterville Public Library. "It's wonderful to have John Green here to celebrate the culmination of our two years of thinking about play together," said Margaret McFadden, provost, dean of faculty, and the NEH/Class of 1940 Distinguished Professor of the Humanities, as she welcomed the author. "His work captures



so much of what the humanities are all about, and why they're so important to our lives." McFadden described how the author has also galvanized thousands of young people to raise funds to help people in need around the world, and said that she has a theory as to what makes his work so important and successful. "In a world that often dismisses or exploits the concerns of young people, he takes teenagers and young adults seriously. He takes their intellect and their deep curiosity about the world seriously," she said. "Yes, he's hilarious, and yes, playful. And in a world where it's often seen to be cool to be cynical and disengaged, he dares to be earnest, to care deeply, to be corny, even, and he invites us to be our best selves. Indeed, to be awesome."

Imagining other lives

Green was joined onstage by Nathan Dunn '27, a biology major and chair of the center's Student Advisory Board, and Associate Professor of English (Creative Writing) Sarah Braunstein. She started the conversation by asking about the author's experience with play and how it has changed over the course of his life. "Part of what play is to me is a chance to imagine what it's like to be someone else. A chance to imagine what it

might be like to live a different life, see the world out of a different set of eyes, have a different consciousness. Reading is also a form of play for me," Green said. "When I read *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield isn't my friend or my spouse or anything. I'm as close to being Holden Caulfield as I can be, and that's magic for me. And so play is very interlinked with my desire to seek magic in the world."

He also talked about how playing through imagining different possibilities has helped him navigate challenges posed by his "moderate to severe" obsessive-compulsive disorder, which he described as empowering. Green encouraged young people to keep playing throughout their lives. He got laughs from the audience when he said that when he was young, he used to imagine adulthood as a "zombie apocalypse virus," i.e., something to avoid as long as possible, but which gets everyone in the end. But it's not like that at all. "The reason it's not like that is because you don't stop playing," he said. "You continue to grow and change, and part of the way you continue to grow and change is through play, through the experience of pushing back against the perceived boundaries. You're not going to be on a one-track your entire adult life. You're going to be able to do lots of different things."



'Failure is part of the process'

When Braunstein, herself a novelist and short story writer, asked Green about his creative process, he told her about an ecological dystopian novel he had once written that was set on a desert island. It was long, complicated, and full of twists and turns. After he finished it, he put it away in a drawer for a few weeks, then took it out to read it over again. "There was nothing there. It was heartbreaking. I just remember reading it in a hotel room and crying because there was no guts to it. There was no heart to it," he said. "The characters were flat, the whole thing was useless, and it wasn't going to do anybody any good." Green shelved the novel, telling the room that out of the 70,000 words he had written, he only liked one sentence. After that, he decided to take another look at what he had written when he was a 22-year-old hospital chaplain and had befriended a 16-year-old who died of cancer. Meeting her became the impetus for writing *The Fault in Our Stars*, which is about teenage cancer patients experiencing love and death. In it, he included the single sentence from the other book: "It was kind of a beautiful day."

"Failure is part of the process. Failure is not bad news," he said. "Of course, I would have preferred for the desert island novel to make its way into the world and be a good book, but I had to write the desert island novel to write *The Fault in Our Stars*. They were contingent upon each other." Green also talked about his new book, which had its nucleus when he and his wife visited a hospital in Sierra Leone where tuberculosis patients sought treatment. Before that visit, the author said, he had thought of the disease as one that primarily affected 19th-century British Romantic poets. But he learned that more than a million people—including 219,000 kids—die of it every year, even though it is curable. Everything is Tuberculosis is about the fight against the world's deadliest disease, and the recent news that the federal government is gutting USAID and other programs means that the odds of the fight just got much worse, he said. "It's such a difficult moment, and it's almost impossible not to respond to that with a measure of despair," he said. "The problem with despair, of course, is that all it makes is more of itself. It's like a bacteria or a virus. It doesn't motivate us. It doesn't help us get out of bed in the morning. It doesn't help us make change. It doesn't help us fight back."



An antidote to despair

Despair is powerful, and it tells a story that makes sense and has an internal logic that's hard to fight. If everything, and everyone, are terrible, then there's no reason to do anything because nothing matters. On the edge of despair, there's anger and disgust: feelings that Green said he has to fight against "all the time." "The problem is that it doesn't work. It has incredible explanatory power, but it's not true because the truth is so much more complicated than that," he said. "The truth is, yes, we are a horror, and we have visited horror upon each other countless times throughout our history. But we are also so much else. We can also be so much else for each other. I know that, because I've seen it." During the question and answer period, people—mostly young, all women—lined up at two microphones to take turns sharing thoughts with Green and the room. One of the things they often wanted to express was an appreciation for books that have often helped them combat despair, or hopelessness, or the feeling that they were alone in the world. "I feel like I, and so many others, can relate to finding almost a liberation in your work," one student said, before asking his advice on how

to create community after leaving college. As with all the questions, Green listened carefully and answered from the heart. "I mean, it's really hard. I think Kurt Vonnegut said once that the main thing that you have to do in adulthood is find ways to cure the terrible disease of loneliness, and that's a responsibility that you have for yourself and also for the people around you," he said. "My biggest recommendation is to check in [with friends and others]. ... And continue to be friends with your college friends if you can, because that's also a gift. Having a friend for 20 years is so special because you have this shared language and experience that's hard to get anywhere else." After the event, Tina Cheng '27, a biology major with a concentration in neuroscience who is a member of the Center for the Arts and Humanities Student Advisory Board, said that Green is a writer who brings people together. "Everyone knows him. I saw so many of my friends here from every single field of study and discipline," she said. "We all, in some sort of way, got something from John Green when we grew up."

Reprinted from Colby News, which initially ran this story on April 17, 2025. *Photography by Ashley Conti and Ben Wheeler*





Play Courses



Fall 2024



AR110: Introduction to Western Art: Renaissance to Today
Daniel Harkett, Associate Professor of Art

AR228: Printmaking I
Amanda Lilleston, Assistant Professor of Art

AR238: Surrealism
Véronique Plesch, James M. Gillespie Professor of Art

AR360: Digital Media III: Sound as Art
Taka Suzuki, Assistant Professor of Art

AY328: Anthropology of Money
Farah Qureshi, Assistant Professor of Anthropology

CI280: Topics in Global Cinema: International Action Cinema
Seth Kim, Assistant Professor of Cinema Studies

CS166: Computational Thinking: Computer Vision
Tahiya Chowdhury, Assistant Professor of Computer Science

EN279: Poetry Writing I
Arisa White, Associate Professor of English (Creative Writing)

EN378: Fiction Writing II: Revision as Generation
Sarah Braunstein, Associate Professor of English (Creative Writing)

GM246: Sports and Society in Germany
Arne Koch, Associate Professor of German and Russian

HI131: Survey of U.S. History, to 1865
Danae Jacobson, Assistant Professor of History

RE128: Introduction to the Study of Religion
Joshua Ulrich, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

TD171: Acting I
Bess Welden, Senior Lecturer of Performance, Theater and Dance

TD264: First Year Dance Project
Annie Kloppenberg, Associate Professor of Performance, Theater & Dance
Matthew Cumbie, Assistant Professor of Performance, Theater, and Dance

Spring 2025



MU256: Music and Childhood
Emmalouise St. Amand, Assistant Professor of Music

PL234: Philosophy and Art
Lydia Moland, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Professor of Philosophy

SP128: Conversation, Composition, and Culture
Sandra Bernal Heredia, Assistant Professor of Spanish

TD285: The Choreographic Process
Matthew Cumbie, Assistant Professor of Performance, Theater, and Dance



*The Internet
Is Killing
Us. **Playing**
Slowly to
Live Longer:
Reflecting
on **Play***

The internet is killing us. It's possible to approach that statement from various angles – potential environmental impacts from energy and water consumption, the political and sociological harms of the ecosystem, or the prevalence of AI as hidden agents embedded in the page and in plain sight as chat bots or production tools. When approaching that statement from a creative arts standpoint, and specifically digital media and the time-based arts, the answer lies somewhere between all of those concerns. The internet and mobile apps are a beautiful and socially creative playground, but they act as a dangerous double-edged sword to the mind and creative spirit. Algorithmically shaped feeds and reel culture cater user-specific content in the form and prioritizes short form content. Influencers and trends dictate norms and even AI created content is a byproduct of reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF). And perhaps that is the biggest challenge facing society and culture today– attention. How do we keep a critical eye toward knowing what choices are being fed to us, and what clicks are actually made out of selfhood and autonomy? Or how do we focus for extended periods of time when 15 seconds is programmed as default?

This is where slowness becomes the most radical form of play in the digital and time-based creative arts. In teaching about increasingly prevalent text-to-image AI processes, I have students start with doing just that. After seeing the AI generated image, students then have to recreate the AI creation using only original images sourced by and available to the student. This form of digital collage work not only teaches the technical aspects of Adobe Photoshop, but it also shows how AI utilizes user fed images, ethically or unethically sourced, reads and identifies user tags, and processes RLHF of prior outputs to create the image from the text

prompt (and how the results become better much quicker). Recreation from individually sourced photographs teaches students to see the creative potential in the banal or often overlooked. Abstraction and manipulation become creative assets and students have to spend time looking around trying to find the right material, color, or object. Students spend extended periods of time looking at their lived environment for creative materials. Perhaps the texture of the carpet can become an approximation of dog fur, or an index finger can be shaped to become an earthworm. The end results are not clean, nor are they intended to be so, but they are wildly original.

In learning about sound as an artform, I open the semester with a 10 minute deep listening exercise. It tunes the students' ears to notice details on the world around them, such as the persistence of HVAC systems and traffic noise, how certain sounds move through the space, and how birds and insects respond to environmental stimuli. This listening process becomes a weekly ritual during the course. Through the repeated act of deep listening, the students became reacquainted to their innate internal clocks – what 10 minutes of time feels like and what sort of complex narratives can unfold when given that time. In technical application, this listening process translates to the students becoming better sound mixers and designers. The patient process of deep listening focuses the attention on how the sonic ecosystem allows for multiple sounds to coexist and interact. Digital Audio Workstations (DAW) give one benefit that the real world does not – it gives the power to attenuate the intensity of the metaphorical HVAC to give more presence to pleasant signals. Students can edit sounds in the DAW to mimic the sonic ecosystem experienced in weekly listening sessions. They can pan audio left to right, or vice versa, and create rhythmic syncopations or calls and responses like insects and birds to shape kinetic soundscapes of their own creation.

So in all of this, I am not advocating for eliminating the internet from our daily lived experience, but perhaps diverting some of our attention back out from the space of the screen for a few more moments – to give the scrolling and tapping thumb a rest – and breathe in the playful potential of the seemingly banal. It might take a moment to notice, but the world is humming with excitement, even in the quietest moments. The internet may be killing us with the noise, but spending time, actual time, playing out in the world is what is giving life back one waking click at a time.



By Taka Suzuki
Assistant Professor of Art





Will Coakley '25 and Sam Lerner '25 (right) receive hands-on guidance from Associate Professor of Art Bradley Borthwick (left). Coakley and Lerner were the recipients of a Big Ideas grant from the CAH in Spring 2025.

Ideas into Impact



At the Center for the Arts and Humanities, we are dedicated to fostering intellectual curiosity and creative exploration among our students. Our grant programs provide crucial support for ambitious projects, original research, and collaborative endeavors. Whether students have a big idea in its early stages, a fully formed research project, or an exciting collaboration with a Colby faculty member, we are committed to supporting their intellectual and creative pursuits.

Big Ideas Grants offer small seed grants to help students pursue projects or events that align with their creative and intellectual interests in the humanities. These grants have funded a wide range of initiatives, including philosophical inquiries, art supplies for new works, and stipends for time to think and create. We aim to empower students to bring their innovative ideas to life, whether through acquiring books on intriguing subjects or participating in workshops and conferences.

Research Grants are available twice a year for original research projects in the humanities. These grants are particularly valuable for students majoring or minoring in the humanities and provide an opportunity to delve deeply into scholarly investigations, potentially leading to significant academic contributions.

Our student grants have enabled students to explore bold ideas, undertake significant research, and engage in meaningful collaborations, significantly enhancing their academic and creative journeys. By providing the resources and support needed to bring their visions to fruition, we have seen students achieve remarkable successes and contribute to the rich intellectual community at Colby College.



Liliana DeTraglia '25

Examining how the city of Portland, Maine has changed and reshaped itself to cater to tourism and the "creative class".

"My research experience in Portland, Maine during JanPlan made possible by the Center of Arts and Humanities was incredible. For my honors thesis for American Studies, I researched the city of Portland and how the city has been rapidly changing in recent years to cater to tourists and creative, young people. I studied what the effects of this focus are, and how it has affected the economy and overall culture of the city. With my funding from the Center of Arts and Humanities, I was able to experience Portland like a local, living in the city for over a week and experiencing all the different neighborhoods and amenities the city has to offer. As a part of my research, I immersed myself within the community, experiencing how the city is changing and how it is making itself appealing to a new, out-of-state, resident base."



Jocelyn Guel '25

Senior thesis: court-watching movement in New York City through an anthropological lens.

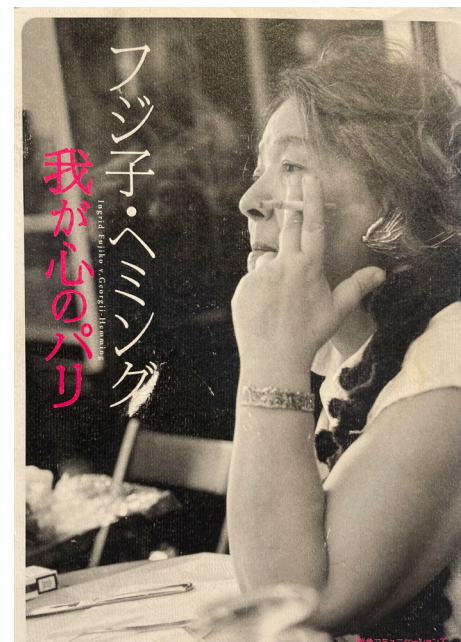
"During my time in NYC, I had the opportunity to participate in courtwatching shifts at the Manhattan Criminal Court and Brooklyn Criminal Court. These shifts took place daily, offering a firsthand look at how arraignments unfold in real-time. Alongside other volunteers, I observed courtroom proceedings, documenting key details such as the case number, charges, the defendant's representation status, and the bail amount set by the judge. These seemingly procedural elements often revealed deeper patterns in judicial decision-making, the disparities in how defendants were treated, and the broader systemic issues within the criminal justice system."



Robin Hoang '25

"Ninja Leads" phenomenon

"Through embodied ethnography and interviews with women residing in Vietnam's capital city Hanoi, I sought to answer key questions regarding the role of gendered mobility of "Ninja Leads" in reshaping traditional notions of women's labor and participation in a rapidly developing urban context. My project explored how these women's mobility represents both a form of resistance to the environmental and capitalist demands placed on them and a response to the dual pressures of professional work and domestic responsibility. This experience has been one of the most meaningful parts of my time at Colby, and I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to pursue this project. The center's grant made it all possible!"



Haru Steinberg '25

Paris of my Heart

This project aims to translate a collection of essays from *Paris of My Heart* by the late Japanese pianist Fujiko Hemming. For this project, Haru traveled to Paris and visited and photographed a number of the places mentioned in Hemming's work.

"Within the city, Montmartre is one of the more personal towns. They say it's the Parisian's hometown. And the French they speak here is said to be really Parisian. In the past, this place was a mountain covered by grapevines, and it was even a battleground in wartime. And somehow bohemians and poor painters came and created a town of artists. The touristy spots are well-known, like the Basilique du Sacre-Coeur or the Place du Tertre, but the real Montmartre's in the small, tourist-free streets and the nonchalant street corners." — An excerpt from Haru Steinberg's translation.



Ella Abisi '25

Her Hamlet

Her Hamlet is a re-imagining of one of the most well-known Shakespearian plays, through text, music, movement, film, and focus. The original work incorporates social themes of power, sexuality, sanity (madness), sexism, revenge, gender, morality, corruption, and appearances, making it still relevant and relatable to young audiences today through vulnerable characters. By changing the genders of Hamlet and Horatio, it allows us to experience the story from the women's perspectives and poses questions of what would happen if it were possible for them to gain power.

"Thanks to The Big Ideas Grant funding, I was able to complete all of the necessary research for my senior project. I wrote and directed an original piece I titled *Her Hamlet*, a feminist Shakespearian adaptation, as a main stage production for the department of theater and dance this spring. Thank you so incredibly much!"

Making Waves: Building a More Sustainable Surfboard

By Portia Hardy

Surfing may not be the first sport that comes to mind when picturing the Maine coast, but for Colby students Will Coakley '25, and Sam Lerner '25, it's a natural part of life. Both passionate surfers, Coakley and Lerner are also deeply aware of the sport's environmental impact, especially when it comes to the materials used in surfboard production.

"It's a pretty consumptive industry," said Lerner, referencing the widespread use of fiberglass and other environmentally damaging materials in traditional surfboards. With a shared goal of making surfing more sustainable, the two set out to create an alternative.

To bring their vision to life, Coakley and Lerner applied for a Big Ideas Grant, a program supported by the Center for the Arts and Humanities that awards up to \$500 for creative and intellectual pursuits in the humanities and humanistic discipline. With the grant in hand, they began developing a prototype for an eco-friendly surfboard, one that reduces the environmental footprint of the sport they love.

Their innovation centers on replacing traditional fiberglass with flax fiber, a renewable material that's difficult to source but far more sustainable. While many surfboards also rely on petroleum-based bio-resin and polystyrene, Coakley and Lerner have also opted for pre-used, or recycled polystyrene whenever possible. "We're giving it a second life, even though you can't make it break down faster," Coakley explained.

Surprisingly, this is not the first sustainable surfboard project to come out of Colby. In 2024, alumnus Mike Ballin '21 worked on a similar project, using recycled plastic to 3D-print a surfboard. It was this project that inspired Coakley and Lerner to pursue and continue the work. Both were thrilled to learn that Ballin not only supported their idea but was also impressed by their progress - especially when he found out they were able to obtain the flax fiber, which is a rare material in the United States.

Lerner recalled the challenge of sourcing the flax. "It's made in Australia, and it was really hard to get it shipped here," he said. After weeks of calling warehouses across the country, they finally located a supplier in Florida. "Whenever we talk to people in the surfboard industry, they're shocked we were able to get our hands on it."



Despite the technical challenges of shaping the board and experimenting with unfamiliar materials, Coakley and Lerner found the process rewarding. They credit Colby's Center for the Arts and Humanities for making the project possible. "The fact that we were able to get project funding and support to do what might be considered a nontraditional academic project has been amazing," said Coakley.

Now, as Coakley and Lerner near the finishing stages of their project, they are eager to test out the boards. What began as a shared concern for sustainability has evolved into a hands-on exploration of environmental humanities. For the two student surfers, riding the waves will carry new meaning: not just a passion for the sport, but a commitment to imagining a more sustainable future.





Humanities at Work: Summer Internships

Colby students connect with Maine communities through paid summer internships at cultural institutions in Waterville and surrounding areas. These internships provide valuable professional experience and opportunities for applied research in the arts. Through these immersive experiences, CAH summer interns gain practical insight and experience into the possibilities of arts-related professions while doing meaningful

work with local, community-focused organizations.

The 2025 CAH summer interns are Eva Northway '27 at the Maine Film Center, Jewel Bird '27 and Haadi Khan '26 at Waterville Creates, Ran Liu '27 and Ruby Pedroza '27 at the Waterville Public Library, and Maggie Haran '27 and Aiden Jones '26 at the L.C. Bates Museum.

“The Waterville Public Library offered me a fresh understanding of the community, and unlocked a new possibility for my future career plan. I enjoyed very much working here, as everyone is always welcoming and supportive, and the job itself being super meaningful. Being a librarian is so much more than I thought it would be. I appreciate the opportunity very much. Thank you all for the wonderful summer!”

– Ran Liu '27

“Working as a Production Assistant with the Maine Film Center and Waterville Creates this summer has been a wonderful experience. The community is very kind, and I made quick friends in the office. It was eye-opening and exciting to play a part in the organization of the 28th Maine International Film Festival, and the satisfaction of seeing the team's hard work come to fruition was indescribable.”

– Eva Northway '27

“I am grateful for the opportunity to work over the summers at Waterville Creates. Being in close proximity to wonderful creatives moved and inspired me as I worked on my own art as part of my Women's, Gender, and Sexuality studies honors thesis. The safe space created by my supervisors, Serena, Lisa, and CJ allowed me to experiment and combine different techniques and mediums which allowed my creativity to thrive!”

– Haadi Khan '26

“My experience at the L. C. Bates Museum has been wonderful. The community is so close and I've had a lot of fun helping to reorganize the museum!”

– Aiden Jones '26

“Working at the LC Bates museum this summer was a wonderful experience that taught me the ins and outs of managing a museum collection. I also worked with an art conservator and learned to apply my skills as an artist to the preservation of history, a rare opportunity that gave me a good introduction into the world of art conservation.”

– Maggie Haran '27

“My internship at Waterville Creates was truly one of a kind. It allowed me to connect deeply with the Waterville community in ways I had never experienced before. This connection with the community has made my Colby experience even more meaningful and fulfilling.”

– Jewel Bird '27

“Working at the public library allowed me to experience working with the public in a way I couldn't on campus. I enjoyed assisting in various summer programs such as craftersnacks with the children's section every week as well as tabling at outside events. I was able to connect with all sorts of people in the community in a way that otherwise would not be possible.”

– Ruby Pedroza '27



Student Advisory Board

One of the core goals of the CAH is to support a community of students, faculty, and local residents who are deeply engaged with the arts and humanities. Each of our student advisory board members is a passionate environmentalist, a hard-working student, and a creative thinker. SAB members plan and attend exciting student-focused events, offer support and ideas to CAH programming, meet regularly to discuss the environment and humanities at Colby, and produce our environmental humanities literary and art magazine, *FAUNA*.

This year, the SAB's activities promoted the environmental humanities and celebrated the excitement of the liberal arts. Our students brought their best, whether they were holding biweekly meetings to plan for the year or running John Green book clubs and inviting guest speakers to Colby. Through their dedication and enthusiasm, our SAB members showcased their passion for environmental advocacy and the liberal arts.



Student Advisory Board



Chair, Nate Dunn '27



Vice Chair, Hunter Mawn '27



Alison Angley '26



Anya Babb-Brott '25



Tina Cheng '27



Sophie Shanae Gould Dulabaum '26



Sara Holden '26



Kate Jaffee '25



Eden Mayer '25



Annabelle Warren '25

“Whether in the context of John Green promotion or what to say to a Maine representative in D.C., my favorite part of working with the Center for the Arts and Humanities Student Advisory Board this year has been that my ideas have been taken seriously and I have been given a legitimate seat at the table in the early planning stages of some very cool events.”

– Hunter Mawn '27 Vice Chair

“One of my most memorable moments from CAH was working altogether as a team on creating this year's edition of *FAUNA*. I loved learning about my classmates through the writing, poetry, and photography they created!”

– Tina Cheng '27





The Humanities Come to DC

By Hunter Mawn '27

March 9th, 2025 was the day that the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) invited colleges from all across the country to Washington, DC to speak with representatives. The NHA is an organization full of motivated experts specializing in bolstering the humanities on both a local and national level. Alex Klein, Director of Government Relations for the NHA, was an instrumental actor in coordinating this mass of higher-ed institutions (including students!) to DC. Thus sets the stage for National Humanities Advocacy Day 2025.

I'll now take you closer in on the action, focusing in on four individuals attending NHA Advocacy Day, from an institution you might be familiar with—Colby College. Their names are Prof. Dean Allbritton, Prof. Sarah Duff, Nate Dunn '27 and Hunter Mawn '27. That last one is me. Last year, Nate accompanied Rory Hallowell '24, and now I was accompanying Nate. And boy, was it cool.

On the first night we arrived, there was a casual welcome reception. This wasn't part of the official programming and so the venue, while well attended, was small. It wasn't until the following morning that I realized how many people were involved in the NHA Advocacy Day. We spent the entire day preparing to meet with Maine state representatives.

The two-floor conference space was full of scheduled keynote lectures and discussions designed to familiarize us with the mission of the NHA and the specific legislation we'd be advocating for: the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Title VI funding, and supporting the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

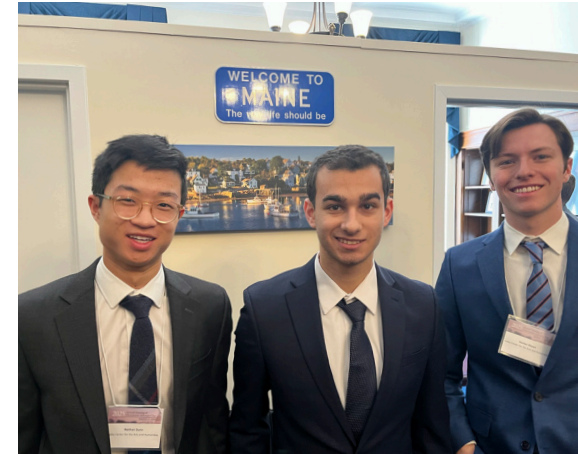
At the end of preparations, every state met with their special coordinator who would come with them to DC and help with meetings. We were the only school in attendance to represent Maine, and our guy was Andy Vaughn, executive director of the

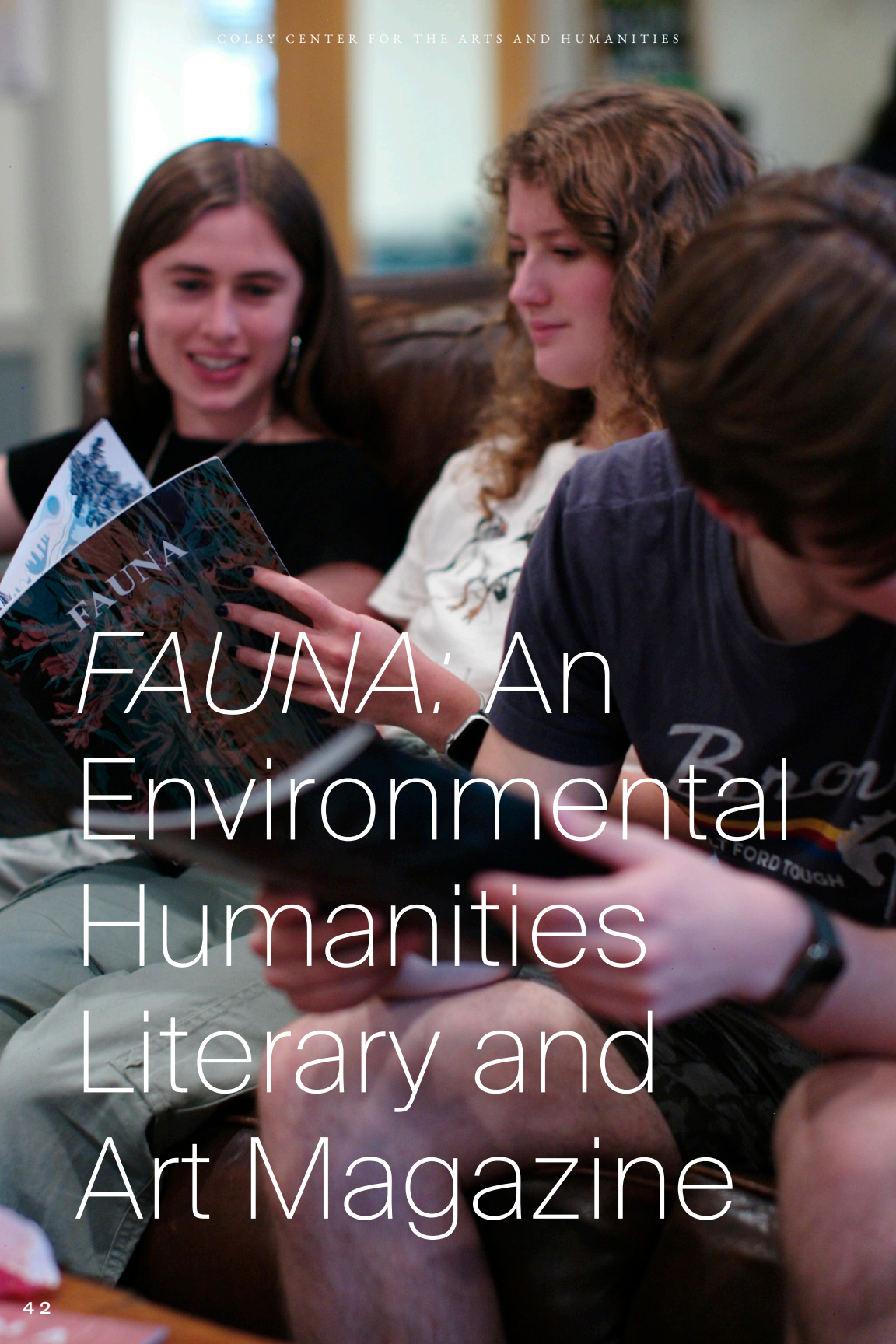
American Society of Overseas Research. Andy wound up being crucial to the following day's success, not to mention, he was insanely nice. After that, the Colby crew got dinner in the evening, at a place called the Vue—an aptly homophonic name.

Then came the day of advocacy! We took a bus down to the Senate, and walked into an annex building where each representative had an office full of staffers. We met with the staff of Jared Golden, Susan Collins, Angus King and Chellie Pingree. Each office had a wholly unique vibe, with the particular highlight of Angus King's office being chock-full of Colby alumni. The conversations with staffers were interesting and felt productive to varying degrees. Most staffers heard us out for our whole lengthy pitch on why these programs—and the humanities in general—matter, which was nice.

Did I mention we ran into Bernie Sanders? No? Oh, well we saw Bernie Sanders. That was cool too. I didn't think to pull my phone out for a picture until he was already turning the corner, so all I got was the back of his head from a distance. Still, it's definitely a picture of Bernie Sanders.

All in all, it was a successful trip! Though I can't say that this was solely my work, or even that it was strictly thanks to the Colby crew. If there's one thing I took away from the experience, it's that a lot of people care about the humanities. Today it's easy to feel a bit alone when you advocate for the humanities to family or friends. When academic science is being threatened by the government, who has time to defend the more artistic, expressionist avenues of academia? But this trip reminded me that humanities do matter to higher education, and that I'm far from alone in believing as much.





FAUNA: An Environmental Humanities Literary and Art Magazine

Dedicated to celebrating environmentally themed poetry, essays, and artwork by Colby students, *FAUNA* is curated and edited by the CAH Student Advisory Board, with CAH Program Coordinator Portia Hardy serving as staff editor.

In this seventh edition of *FAUNA*, you will find creative and thought provoking work grounded in the natural world and its many complexities. The magazine is a student-led project supported by the Center for the Arts and Humanities and shaped by the voices of the Environmental Humanities community at Colby, including students, faculty, and staff.

Each year, we welcome submissions in a wide range of forms such as photography, poetry, prose, and visual art. Each issue is a reflection of the talent, curiosity, and care within our community. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this edition and helped bring it to life.



"A pelican post-dive" by Madison Lin '25



"Camping at Mount Cook" by Eden Mayer '25



"Environmental Racism vs JUSTICE" by Emma Rothwell '26



"Stink Bug" by Annie Thomas '27

Games We Live By: Reflecting on *Play*

I grew up in a community that was experimental, adventurous, provocative, and playful in nearly every way: Burlington, VT. The mayor was a socialist named Bernie Sanders who brought a moral framing to economic issues and injected fresh ideas into political discourse. The first album I purchased was by Phish, a local band who surprised audiences each night with unpredictable, genre-spanning performances during which they turned time elastic with improvisational masterpieces. Even the private sector was inspiring in the way local companies like Burton and Seventh Generation centered people and the planet over profits, prioritizing social objectives well before B Corp labeling existed. A local ice cream shop, Ben and Jerry's, philosophically questioned "If it's not fun, why do it?" My dad led the Parks and Recreation Department, immersing me in all types of local programming and allowing me to experience the art of community building. Situated in this context, the concept of "play"; felt as autonomic as breathing.

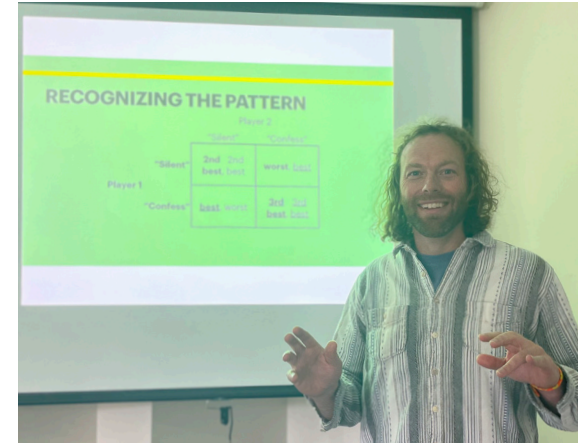
My life as a scholar reflects the engagement and sense of purpose shared by these influences. The intellectual playground where I spend most of my time is a field known as game theory. The juxtaposition of "game" and "theory" fittingly communicates that it's a space that is animated and lighthearted on the surface, with abstraction serving as a vehicle to have meaningful conversations. Tic-tac-toe isn't simply a game for children, but can represent how companies might analyze rivals' strategies or inform negotiation tactics. Rock-paper-scissors explains penalty kicks in soccer, but also merger and acquisition decisions, monitoring and enforcement activities, military strategy, and even the genetic diversity we observe within a species. A duel with Nerf slingshots in class entitles us to perform Hamilton showtunes, but also understand when a company might launch a product or a candidate enters a political race. Game theory is essential for understanding how the world works.

Through a game theory lens, I've published research on why countries allow too much pollution, how competition across states to attract business hurts state budgets, and when changes to auction rules might support historically underrepresented businesses. I've documented environmental injustice in the siting of high-polluting firms, demonstrated concerning price differences for artwork based on the subject's skin tone, and provided evidence that bidder training programs support companies owned by women and minorities. In my classes, I curate games that can be experienced, but which share an incentive structure with broader social issues. This intentionality allows for conversations about real-world challenges. The prisoner's dilemma isn't about Bonnie and Clyde, it's about political campaigns, corporate advertising and pricing, pollution, resource management, and national defense spending. Understanding the interdependencies, incentive structures, and our own values is central to making a difference through changing the game.

I challenge you to consider how the next game you play might reflect a simplified version of a real-world complexity. Perhaps the key to solving some of the most challenging problems lies hidden beneath the joy experienced playing games. I mean, if it's not fun, why do it?



By Tim Hubbard
Professor of Economics



Facing our Future: The Environmental Humanities Initiative



Students perform “Webs of Reciprocity” on the banks of the Kennebec River in Winslow, Maine. This performance was collaboratively designed and organized by Assistant Professor of Performance, Theatre, and Dance Gwyneth Shanks and the students of “Decolonizing Botany”. Shanks was a CAH Faculty Fellow in Environmental Humanities in 24-25.

The Environmental Humanities Initiative fosters collaboration across disciplines, engaging students and faculty in the cultural, historical, ethical, and imaginative dimensions of environmental inquiry. Drawing on the strengths of Colby's Environmental Studies Department, the Buck Lab for Climate and Environment, and a longstanding institutional commitment to sustainability, the initiative supports interdisciplinary coursework, public programming, and research that explore our evolving relationship to the environment.

At the heart of this work is a commitment to experimentation, collaboration, and public engagement. This year, CAH supported three

faculty fellows whose contributions included new interdisciplinary courses, public events, and ongoing research. The initiative also bolstered student work in environmental humanities, from conference participation to hands-on research. Hunter Mawn '27 took part in the Climate Change and Human Rights Wiki Scholars course, learning how to contribute scholarly content to public-facing platforms. Jasper McGill '27, a Philosophy and Religious Studies major, constructed a homemade planetarium as an exploration of cosmology, perception, and our embodied relationship to the night sky—a project that blended technical skill, philosophical inquiry, and environmental awareness.



Through partnerships with the Environmental Studies Department and the Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs, the initiative brought prominent speakers and practitioners to campus, broadening conversations around climate, justice, and sustainability. At the same time, the initiative deepened its investment in faculty scholarship through two cornerstone programs: the annual **Summer Institute in Environmental Humanities** which draws international scholars for a week of collaborative research and exchange; and the yearlong **faculty seminar**, which convenes a group of Colby faculty to explore pressing environmental themes and generate new work.

In addition to research and programming, the initiative supports the development of project-based, laboratory-style, and interdisciplinary courses that ask critical questions about the environment from humanistic perspectives. It also facilitates collaborations with artists, writers, and thinkers from outside the college, enriching Colby's curriculum and community with diverse voices and approaches. By cultivating sustained, interdisciplinary engagement, the Environmental Humanities Initiative affirms the central role of humanistic inquiry in meeting the environmental challenges of our time.



Fall 2024 **AY364: Toxicity, Health, and the Pharmaceutical Self**
Winifred Tate, Professor of Anthropology

BI118: Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
Andrew Marshall, Visiting Instructor of Biology

EA120: Nature in East Asian Literature and Culture
Kim Besio, Oak Professor of East Asian Studies

EN283: Environmental Humanities: Stories of Crisis and Resilience
Chris Walker, Assistant Professor of English

EN324: Creative Environmental Communication
Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, Associate Professor of English

EN326: Strange Natures: Queer Landscapes of Early American Literature
Katherine Stubbs, Lee Family Associate Professor of English

EN350: Another World is Possible: Ecotopian Visions
Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, Associate Professor of English

EN493N Seminar: 17th-century Literature and the Natural World
Elizabeth Sagaser, Associate Professor of English

ES226: Environmental Activism
Gail Carlson, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies

ES297: Power, Nature, and Domination, an Intro to Political Ecology
Atal Ahmadzai, Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies

ES231: Environmental and Natural Resource Economics
Sanval Nasim, Assistant Professor of Economics

ES364: Climate Change, Justice, and Health
Gail Carlson, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies

ES397: Environmental Degradation, Security and Conflicts
Atal Ahmadzai, Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies

HI348: U.S. Environmental History
Danae Jacobson, Assistant Professor of History

LA335: Interplay Between Speculative Fiction and Environmental Fiction
Luis Millones, The Allen Family Professor of Latin American Literature

PL244: Vegan Studies: Animals, Politics, Environment, and Health
Keith Peterson, Associate Professor of Philosophy; Chair of Philosophy

PS363: Psychology and Neuroscience of Climate Change
Derek Huffman, Assistant Professor of Psychology

TD262A: Decolonizing Botany
Gwyneth Shanks, Assistant Professor of Performance, Theater and Dance

SP343: Indigenous Textualities, Decoloniality, and Land Sovereignty
Tiffany Miller, Assistant Professor of Spanish

WD115: First-Year Writing: Landscape and Place
Megan Cook, Arthur Jeremiah Roberts Associate Professor of Literature



Environmental Humanities Courses

*JanPlan 2025***EN237: Environmental Writing in the Himalayas: Practicing the Arts of Unmastery**

Sarah Braunstein, Associate Professor of English (Creative Writing), and Chris Walker, Assistant Professor of English

AR297: Monumental Woodcut & Maine

Amanda Lilleston, Assistant Professor of Art

*Spring 2025*

AY221: Of Beasts, Pets, and Wildlife: What Animals Mean to Humans
Suzanne Menair, Lecturer of Anthropology

CL255: Greek and Roman Science and Technology
Kassandra Miller, Assistant Professor of Classics

EC231: Environmental and Natural Resource Economics
Jen Meredith, Assistant Professor of Economics

EC468: Seminar: Challenges of the Anthropocene: Views from the Global South
Sanval Nasim, Assistant Professor of Economics

EN120H: Language, Thought, and Writing: Animal/Human/Machine
Chris Walker, Assistant Professor of English

EN283: Environmental Humanities: Stories of Crisis and Resilience
Sephora McIntyre, Visiting Instructor of American Studies

EN344: Medieval Eco-poetics
Melissa Heide, Visiting Assistant Professor of English

EN357: Literature and Environment
Melissa Heide, Visiting Assistant Professor of English

ES118: Environment and Society
Atal Ahmadzai, Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, Justin Becknell, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies, and Sephora McIntyre, Visiting Instructor of American Studies

GE262: Earth's Climate: Past, Present, and Future
Bess Koffman, Associate Professor of Geology

PL243: Environmental Ethics
Keith Peterson, Associate Professor of Philosophy; Chair of Philosophy

ES366: Pollution and Human Health
Gail Carlson, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies

LA372: Environmental History of Latin America
Ben Fallaw, Professor of Latin American Studies

LT362: Virgil's Eclogues: Lovers, Exiles, and Shepherds
Kerill O'Neill, Julian D. Taylor Professor of Classics

ST356: Queer Feminist STS
Ashton Wesner, Assistant Professor of Science, Technology & Society

TD262: The Garden of Trans Care
AB Brown, Assistant Professor of Performance, Theater and Dance

WD115I: First-Year Writing: Landscape and Place
Megan Cook, Arthur Jeremiah Roberts Associate Professor of Literature

WG338: Indigenous Storytellers: Gender and Sexuality
Laura Fugikawa, Assistant Professor of American Studies and Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies



Exploring Veganism: A Trip to the Peace Ridge Animal Sanctuary

By Portia Hardy

This past fall, Professor of Philosophy Keith Peterson led his humanities lab class "Vegan Studies: Animals, Politics, Environment, and Health" on an immersive field trip to the Peace Ridge Animal Sanctuary. Students Ella Carlson '25, Joe Grassi '25, and Presley Privitera '25 were all deeply moved by the experience.

The course, sponsored by the Humanities in Action fund, introduces students to veganism as both a philosophy and a social movement. Since the 1970s, philosophers have challenged the ethics of animal captivity and exploitation, engaging in debates around animal rights and environmentalism. In recent years, veganism has evolved into an intersectional movement focused on liberation for both nonhumans and humans. The course

introduces students to veganism not only as a dietary choice but as a deeply interdisciplinary framework, one that spans philosophy, politics, environmental studies, and public health. With its innovative approach, the class invites students to explore what it means to live ethically in an interconnected world. Field-based experiences are a core component of the course, allowing students to engage directly with the lives and conditions of animals and the people working to protect them.

"Each trip links back to our class themes," he shared. "The animals part belongs to Peace Ridge Sanctuary, the environment part includes a trip to a veganic farm, the health part involves going to the grocery store and cooking a vegan meal together, and the politics are covered in the classroom." These immersive experiences, he said, deepen students' understanding and offer new perspectives on the real-world implications of veganism.

For Privitera, the visit to Peace Ridge was eye-opening: "The Peace Ridge Sanctuary was so cool to me," she said. "I'm from the suburbs of Boston. I've never really interacted with farm animals or been on a farm. Being able to touch and see them as more than farm animals left a lasting impact on me. I loved the way they spoke about each animal and shared their names and personalities."

Peace Ridge Animal Sanctuary, located in Brooks, Maine, rescues farmed animals, equines, special-needs dogs, and other animals who cannot find homes elsewhere. Each animal is treated as an individual, which is a rare experience for farmed animals. The students toured the sanctuary's High Meadow Farm, its flagship facility and home to more than 400 animals. From goats to dairy cows, alpacas to donkeys, and even a piglet named Portia, students engaged with the animals on a personal level.

For Grassi, the visit hit close to home, literally. He was excited to show classmates the area where he grew up, just a few miles



from the sanctuary. Having grown up on a rural Maine farm, he has long reflected on the ethics of animal agriculture. "We grow mostly vegetables and some animals, and we eat those animals," he said. "It's definitely something I've grown up thinking about and talking with my family about. It's a big challenge for me, thinking about how I want to live and how I want to provide for myself and my family." His sense of place made the visit especially meaningful. "It's all very much home to me. It was really cool to see this organization that's right in my backyard. It was wonderful to take that in and see this pocket of amazing people doing such amazing work."

Privitera echoed the power of seeing animals in a new light. "Animals in the media are just seen as a thing, or an instrument for humans to consume. Seeing them at Peace Ridge was such a change of pace. It brought everything we'd talked about in class to life. It was an awesome experience!"

The class meets once a week for three hours, which allows time for deeper, more meaningful discussions. Peterson shared that the course material must align with all the themes in the title (animals, politics, environment, and health) and be philosophically compelling. Carlson and Grassi noted that the longer class format fosters comfort and trust among classmates and encourages more engaged dialogue. Carlson even finds herself continuing these conversations with friends over meals in the dining hall, which is exactly the ripple effect Peterson hoped for when designing the course.

He understands that making significant lifestyle changes during college can be difficult, especially within the constraints of a campus dining system. "It's difficult for anybody, let alone a student in a fairly structured environment where they don't get to choose what they eat," he acknowledged. Still, he believes the course lays the groundwork for future shifts in thinking and living, with a goal that is less about immediate transformation and more about long-term reflection. In this way, the course gives students tools to navigate the ethical and environmental questions they will continue to face long after their time at Colby.



The Colby Summer Institute in Environmental Humanities

'The Richness of the Scholarship is so Alive': Hi'iilei Hobart '03 returns to Colby as a leader for this year's Summer Institute in Environmental Humanities

By Abigail Curtis

Every year, Colby's Summer Institute in Environmental Humanities brings together talented and passionate academics, artists, activists, and researchers from all over to share ideas and works in progress that explore the complex relationship between humans and the environment.

For one of this summer's seminar leaders, the weeklong institute is also something of a homecoming. Hi'iilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart '03, an assistant professor of Native and Indigenous

studies at Yale University, was delighted to return to Colby to be part of the environmental humanities conversation, which she described as remarkable.

"It doesn't always happen in these academic gatherings where the collective richness of the scholarship is so alive," Hobart said. "To be invited to be one of the seminar leaders is such a gift—and a surprise, and an honor. It's one of the most exciting professional things to have happened to me, to be asked back to your alma mater."

A long journey

Hobart is Kanaka Maoli, or Indigenous Hawaiian, and through her teaching, research, and writing, she weaves together food studies, native and Indigenous studies, and environmental studies.

She's an academic, though an unconventional one, with advanced degrees in the fields of decorative arts, design, and culture; rare books librarianship and archives management; and food studies.

Her chosen path has led her to fascinating subjects and important projects, including the 2022 repatriation of iwi kupuna, or ancestral remains of native Hawaiians, from the Yale Peabody Museum. She saw the jaw and teeth bones on a visit to the museum soon after she started teaching there and made it a priority to work with university officials and other Kānaka Maoli students to arrange their return.

Hobart's first book, *Cooling the Tropics: Ice, Indigeneity, and Hawaiian Refreshment*, published by Duke University Press in 2022, won several prestigious awards, including the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association Best First Book Prize, the Scholars of Color First Book Award from Duke University Press, and the Samuel and Ronnie Heyman Prize from the Yale University Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

When Hobart first came to Colby from Hawai'i, she had no idea that any of this would be in store for her. "I wasn't ever expecting or imagining that I would become an academic," she said.

Truthfully, it seemed a little like serendipity that she discovered the College at all. Hobart stumbled upon an online multiple-choice quiz about where to go to college from the Princeton Review during the early days of the internet in the late 1990s, and liked the answer it gave her.

"It told me I should go to Colby, and so I applied early decision," she remembered. "Going so far out of one's context to a new place is not an easy transition, but I was so thrilled with Colby, and I got a really great education."

After a rocky first semester, Hobart found her groove, taking classes from favorite professors like Elisa Narin Van Court, associate professor of English, emerita, and Jennifer Finney Boylan, who served as director of the Creative Writing Program and co-chair of the English Department.

In their classes, she fell in love with the discovery of learning and with the feeling of having space to write and think.

Hobart also started dating her husband, Jake Hobart '03, during their junior year.



All of these threads contribute to a deep regard for the College

"Colby is actually the institution that I do feel really fond of," she said. "I have appreciated the commitment to liberal arts education, which feels really important to me, and it has overall been very thoughtful in how it navigates higher education waters, which are honestly quite choppy. I really am so pleased to be an alum."

The importance of the Summer Institute in Environmental Humanities

The summer institute, now in its sixth year, is part of the College's larger initiative for environmental humanities. The multidisciplinary field recognizes the failure of the industrial world to address complex environmental problems and the need to question long-held assumptions about human interactions with nature.

One of the week's important goals is to create space for conversations about cutting-edge environmental humanities topics, and over the years, the summer institute has become a leading gathering place for established and emerging scholars. The institute, which is organized and hosted by the Center for the Arts and Humanities, is also dedicated to building an international network of scholars and creating opportunities for mentorship and rigorous scholarly engagement.

Dean Allbritton, director of the Center for the Arts and Humanities, said that at a time of federal funding upheaval and higher education pressures, the institute's mission is all the more critical.

"We're at a moment where bringing people together, having these conversations, and providing a space for thinking together is the most important it's ever been, I would say, because we're losing repositories of knowledge and we're losing access to knowledge," he said. "It's also important because of the joy of being together and thinking together. Every year, the summer institute feels like a community, and we

become so close through such intensive work. I think that is really valuable."

Interest in the institute has grown over the years, with 40 fellows in attendance this summer, the most there have ever been. Hobart joins the other seminar leaders, Allison Carruth of Princeton University, Hsuan L. Hsu of the University of California, Davis, and Max Liboiron of the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Each brings diverse perspectives and experience to the work, Allbritton said, adding that it is special to have a Colby alum in the mix.

"Having Hi'ilei here has been just incredible," he said. "It's been great to have someone with such deep knowledge of Colby and Waterville, who's also coming back to it with fresh eyes. I have really appreciated her viewpoint and her thoughts."



A unique and complicated state park

Earlier this week, Hobart gave a keynote address at the Chace Community Forum called "Saving Kahana: The Politics of Conservation and the Hawaiian Pleasurescape." In it, she shared a deeply researched and thoughtful meditation on a unique Hawaiian state park on the island of O'ahu, and it's part of her second book project, *Pleasure Seekers: Land, Power, and Colonial Parkspace*.

The audience listened carefully as Hobart talked about Ahupua'a 'O Kahana State Park, which was established as a "living park" in the 1970s, the only such designated park in Hawaii. It was created to showcase traditional native Hawaiian lifestyles, cultural practices, and environmental stewardship. Alongside standard park amenities like hiking trails and public restrooms, the park is also home to 31 households. In order to maintain the terms of their lease agreements, those families must complete 25 hours of labor per month by facilitating cultural programs for the public.

"Because of this, life in Kahana unfolds in the shadow of political, budgetary, and social management, land zoning laws, building and infrastructure codes, community surveys, and master plans, which manage residential life in a site maintained for public leisure," Hobart said. "Such an arrangement is not only unusual, but also complicated and difficult for the people who have called Kahana their traditional homelands for generations. It is an arrangement for people who refuse to leave."

In her book, she considers Kahana and several other state parks in terms of the ongoing ramifications of colonialism, development pressures, and the idealization and romanticization of the Hawaiian tropical paradise that took root in the mainland U.S. after World War II.

"In what ways do pleasure-seeking practices dovetail with things like conservation and preservation toward settler-colonial ends?" she asked. "And how do Kanaka Maoli communities and native peoples more broadly navigate these structures through creative forms of resistance and care?"



A unique and complicated state park

One answer may be in the way that people can love unreservedly and be in relationship with the land that is their home, no matter how complex the situation. Hobart described a conversation she had with a resident of Kahana whose words were the opposite of dry bureaucracy.

The woman told her she loved her home almost with the kind of passion you would feel for a romantic partner. She adored its beauty and the way she felt Kahana cared for her and the other residents. As she spoke, she gestured toward the trees, mountains, and sky, taking in the totality of the valley in her view.

"I could see what she meant about taking land as your lover. You want to know all its names and stories. You want to pour into it what it gives to you," Hobart said. "My friend's description of her relationship with Kahana narrated something radically different than the forms of legal belonging outlined by tenant leases with the state."

It's a living relationship, and it matters

"What I would like to emphasize most is that specificities of people and place matter when doing this work because it is in the specifics that we can understand how large, unwieldy processes of imperialism and colonialism operate on the ground," Hobart said. "The dispossessive devil is in the details, so to speak."

Reprinted from Colby News, which initially ran this story on August 1, 2025. [Photography by Ashley L. Conti and Ben Wheeler.](#)

2025 SIEH Seminar Leaders



Allison Carruth



Hi'ilei Hobart



Hsuan Hsu



Max Liboiron





Image from *The Garden of Trans Care*, an interactive installation that looks at how queer and trans people have used plants as sources of sustenance, pleasure, community building, and self-determination. The installation was collaboratively designed and organized by Assistant Professor of Performance, Theatre, and Dance AB Brown and students in their course. Brown was a CAH Faculty Fellow in Environmental Humanities in 24-25 and the recipient of a grant from the Humanities in Action Fund.

Photo by *Melissa Blackall Photography*

CAH Faculty Fellows



AB Brown



Gwyneth Shanks



Aaron Hanlon



Taka Suzuki



Amanda Lilleston

By Kayla Voigt '14

Five faculty members received fellowships from the Colby Center for the Arts and Humanities: Aaron Hanlon, associate professor of English; Taka Suzuki, assistant professor of art; Amanda Lilleston, assistant professor of art; and AB Brown and Gwyneth Shanks, assistant professors of performance, theater, and dance.

Fellows spend their year developing or reworking humanities courses related to either digital scholarship or environmental inquiry and will offer a public program or event. This year's fellows will engage students across a variety of disciplines.

Taka Suzuki

Art students who grew up with a love of animated shows and films get a chance to create digital media with Taka Suzuki's four-part series of courses on the subject. "I've set it up so the courses are modular, which makes it accessible to all students. Each of the classes teaches a very specific skill set and program, from graphic design to animation," he said.

His fellowship focuses specifically on the course Digital Media IV: Experimental Film and Video Art. "Experimental film is a type of cinema that's really niche, like a combination of creative writing and poetry mixed with filmmaking," said Suzuki. "We're going to dive into the video editing software Adobe Premiere. But the way we're doing it is to create non-narrative constructions, so students have to think about making it personal without following a traditional point of view."

Aaron Hanlon

Generative artificial intelligence programs like ChatGPT and Bard get a lot of hype these days about replacing writers. For Aaron Hanlon, the value in AI is not in its generative capabilities, but in how it can sift through thousands of works of literature to find answers to questions about human nature.

"This is going to be an important part of the future of how we study literature," said Hanlon. "Exploring ways to incorporate digital scholarship in the Center for the Arts and Humanities and also in humanistic research at Colby more broadly is very exciting."

AB Brown and Gwyneth Shanks

It's one thing to read about historical movements that shaped the world as we know it, and another to experience it. AB Brown and Gwyneth Shanks want to bring students and audiences into a colonial world, one plant at a time, through their multi-year performance project a haunted botany.

"This multi-year performance piece looks broadly at the colonial history of plants,

tracing those histories and the ways it reveals narratives that do not often circulate about these plants and the surprising ways they continue to shape our present moment," said Brown.

For their environmental inquiry fellowship, each will teach a different aspect of creating their year-end multidisciplinary performance. In the fall, Shanks will teach Collaborative Company: Decolonizing Botany, while Brown will teach Acts of Activism: Staging Environmental Justice in the spring.

Amanda Lilleston

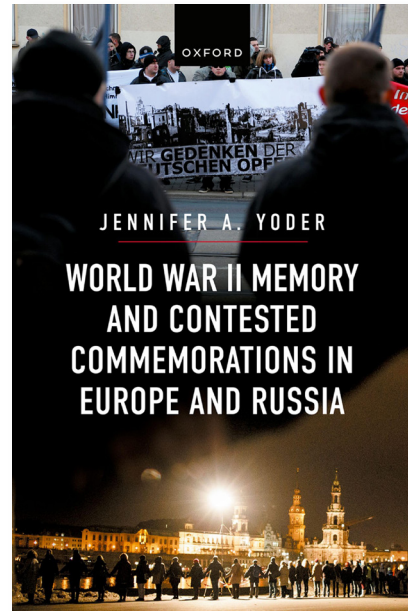
As a printmaker, Amanda Lilleston uses her work to help her make sense of place and the environment. She'll be teaching Monumental Woodworking in Maine this Jan Plan through her environmental inquiry fellowship to give students an introduction to different printmaking methods but also a meditative way to process the world around them.

"The idea is to give students the basic foundations of relief carving and woodcut printmaking, but also talking about their relationship to place and their environment," said Lilleston. "I've found in my own practice that translating words and ideas into new forms like this is really powerful in how we perceive ideas."

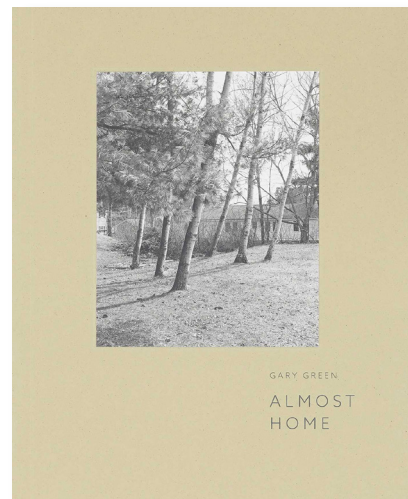
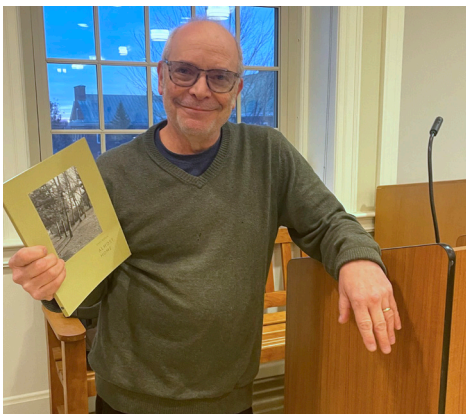
Excerpted from Colby News, which initially ran this story on July 10, 2024.

Faculty Book Celebrations

As part of our commitment to fostering a vibrant intellectual culture and promoting the importance of humanities research and scholarship, the CAH annually sponsors faculty book celebrations for new works published in the humanities. These faculty featured this year offered book readings, dynamic Q&A sessions from engaged audiences, and fruitful discussions that continued beyond the events themselves. These events were co-sponsored by the departments of Art and Government.



World War II Memory and Contested Commemorations in Europe and Russia
Robert E. Diamond Professor of Government and Global Studies Jennifer Yoder



Almost Home
Professor of Art Gary Green

Course Development Grants

At the Center for the Arts and Humanities, we are reimagining what the humanities can look like, from lab-based experimentation to curatorial practice, from environmental storytelling to digital research design. Each year, we fund bold, creative course development that pushes the boundaries of humanistic inquiry. For 2024–2025, grants supported new courses in environmental humanities, race and identity, digital humanities, museum works and exhibitions, and more.

Humanities Labs

A hallmark of the CAH, these lab-based courses engage students in humanistic inquiry through an emphasis on method, practice, and collaboration.

AM351: Machigonne to Portland: A Digital Atlas
Ben Lisle, Associate Professor of American Studies

AR316: Photography, History, and the Museum
Tanya Sheehan, Ellerton M. and Edith K. Jetté Professor of Art

AR397: Alphabet of Creation: Ben Shah's Illustrated Books
Véronique Plesch, Professor of Art

IT298: Publishing Electronic Literature: Hands-On Crash Course
Gianluca Rizzo, Paul D. and Marilyn Paganucci Associate Professor of Italian Language and Literature

Environmental Humanities

At the intersection of ecological thinking and cultural analysis, these interdisciplinary courses explore how environmental change shapes and is shaped by human values, histories, and narratives.

AR297: Monumental Woodcuts and Maine
Amanda Lilleston, Assistant Professor of Art

TD262: Collaborative Company: Decolonizing Botany
Gwyneth Shanks, Assistant Professor of Performance, Theater and Dance

TD 262: Collaborative Company: Devising Physical Theater
AB Brown, Assistant Professor of Performance, Theater and Dance

Digital Humanities

Bridging technology and critical inquiry, these courses introduce students to digital tools and methods that expand how we interpret, visualize, and share humanistic research.

AR370: Digital Media IV: Experimental Film & Video Art
Taka Suzuki, Assistant Professor of Art

EN354: Reading with Computers
Aaron Hanlon, NEH/Class of 1940 Distinguished Associate Professor of English

Race and Identity

Focusing on the social, political, and cultural dimensions of race and identity, these courses examine how difference is constructed, lived, and challenged across time and place.

EN321: Black Liberation Theology in Early America
Sam Plasencia, Assistant Professor of English

RE328: Race and Religion in the United States
Joshua Ulrich, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

Museum Works & Exhibitions Grants

Offered in collaboration with the Colby Museum of Art, these courses provide hands-on experience with objects, exhibitions, and curatorial methods, connecting academic study with public-facing work.

HI131: Survey of US History to 1865
Danae Jacobson, Assistant Professor of History

TD264: First Year Dance Project
Annie Kloppenberg, Professor of Performance, Theater & Dance

WD115: What is the Role of the Museum and Why Does it Matter?
Carolyn Megan, Visiting Assistant Professor of Writing



The McFadden Fund for Humanistic Inquiry

Co-managed by the CAH and the Humanities Division, the Margaret T. McFadden Fund for Humanistic Inquiry provides support for both individual projects as well as the Public Humanistic Inquiry Lab (PHIL). The fund is the result of a generous \$1-million gift from Trustee Anne Clarke Wolff '87 and Benjamin "Ted" E. Wolff III '86.

Each fall and spring, the McFadden Fund Committee invites applications from faculty in the Humanities Division seeking funding for a range of projects that support scholarly work. Broadly defined, the McFadden Grants are meant to provide key support for those looking to complete projects related to their research, scholarship, and creative activities. The McFadden Committee for 2024-25 was Dean Allbritton, Megan Cook, Mary Ellis Gibson, Russell Johnson, Kassi Miller, and Kerill O'Neil.

2024-2025 Grant Recipients

Fall 2024

Christopher Richards

Support image permissions and printing costs for the Roman de Silence as part of "Couvertures and Silences: Transing the Illuminated."

"Thanks to the support of Colby's Center for the Arts and Humanities, I was able to pursue and publish research I once thought out of reach. The Silence manuscript is one of the most important sources of trans history from the Middle Ages, but its high access fees have kept most of its images out of public view. With the help of the Margaret T. McFadden Fund for Humanistic Inquiry, my work has made the majority of those images available for the first time."

Spring 2025

Matthew Cumbie

Support of *This Place: Downtown Places*

Daniel Harkett

Support the image and open access subventions for *Animal Modernities: Images, Objects, and Histories*

Tanya Sheehan

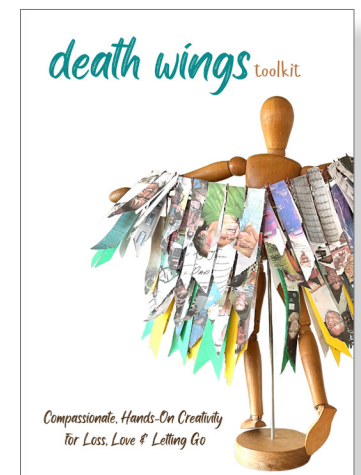
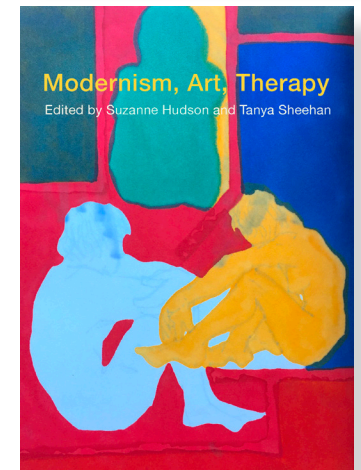
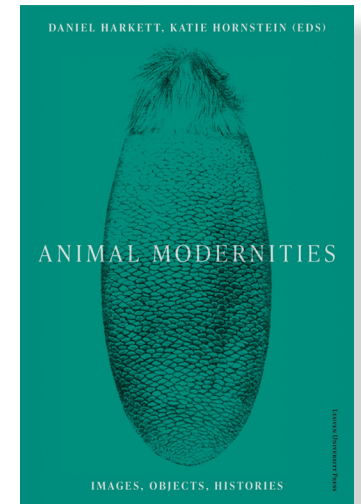
Support ongoing open access availability for *Modernism, Art, Therapy*

Christopher Richards

Support graphic design and reproduction costs associated with imagery in "Chapter 1: Creation and Transformation" (from *The Canon in Drag*)

Bess Welden

Death Wings Toolkit





Virtual Play fostering In-Person Connection: Reflecting on *Play*



By Kate Hunter
Program Manager, Colby Arts Office

In 2023, when I accepted a full time position as the Program Manager in the Colby Arts Office, I also launched my indie video game podcast *No Small Games* in the same week. *No Small Games* started as a bi-weekly show, but is now a full-blown independent games media entity. As an all-women team in a male-dominated field, we publish reviews, go to gaming conventions,

and work alongside other games media, content creators, game publishers, and developers to review and highlight the artistry of independent games. At this point, playing games is a crucial part of my work, and my every-day life!

I didn't grow up playing video games, and it wasn't until 2021 when I realized that they had the potential to be something more than my preconceived notions of violence and shooting simulations. Video games could somehow understand my complicated dating history, and indulge my passion for pop music and maximalism! I've also been able to see myself (plus-size,

queer, emotionally damaged) represented positively and often lacking stereotypes. Indie video games don't always appeal to the masses, but instead focus on the genuine and diverse human experience.

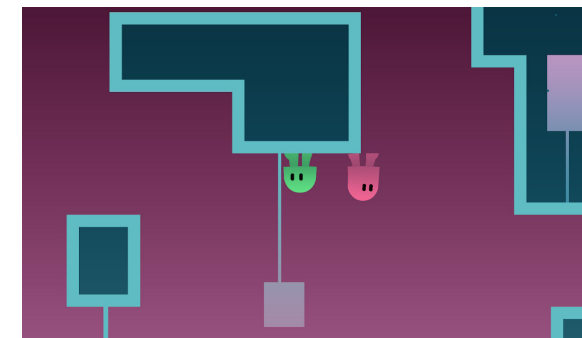
The things I've learned from playing games are a crucial part of how I approach my work in the arts at Colby. In the cultural zeitgeist, video games are not widely considered as a respectable artistic medium. As arts educators, we often talk about interdisciplinary work, and I find that video games are a perfect virtual canvas for experiencing collaborative artistic processes. Between coding, music, visual art, voice acting, and storytelling, video games are naturally interdisciplinary, but they take us one step further by requiring the player to be an active participant in their artistic expression. I'm always seeking ways to bring video games into my work at Colby, and share this with others, so they might also have the opportunity to see themselves represented positively in video games.

I started by hosting video game nights on the ground floor of Greene Block, which then

led to teaching Central Maine educators about using video games as teaching tools for the Waterville Public Schools' Educator Professional Development series. It was amazing to witness educators light up when they were able to explore games in a place without judgement or expectations. We found that playing video games as a group could foster connection and openness to learning in a very approachable environment, and some of these games and this style of playing together would hopefully make their way into public school classrooms.

Playing video games taught me how to lead with fun, both in my job at Colby and with *No Small Games*. Approaching the arts playfully gives me the opportunity to truly connect with others, which is a crucial part of my work in both fields! Art can still be uninviting to so many, and leading with play can help people feel safe, valued, present, and welcome. It can even cause the most fragile of egos to let go, lean in, and pick up a controller!

NO
SMALL
GAMES





Promotional artwork of Emily Merrit and Kate Hunter, producers and co-hosts of the indie game podcast, *No Small Games*. Artwork by: berryleche

Collaborating across Campus

The Center for the Arts and Humanities builds its work through partnerships across departments, disciplines, and communities. This year, those collaborations sparked a wide range of public conversations, performances, installations, and gatherings that reflected our shared commitment to inquiry, care, and creative exploration.

A new cycle of the Public Humanistic Inquiry Lab (PHIL) launched this year under the theme *Thinking with Animals*, organized

by Daniel Harkett (Art) and Laura Nüffer (East Asian Studies). With support from the CAH, the PHIL brought together faculty, students, and invited speakers to explore how animals shape and are shaped by human understanding. From representation to relationship, the PHIL opened space for critical reflection on the place of non-human life in humanistic inquiry.

Other projects asked us to imagine different kinds of futures. *The Garden of Trans Care*, directed by CAH Fellow AB Brown,

transformed the Gordon Center into a multisensory installation and performance space. The work celebrated queer life, resilience, and ecological hope, offering a vision of care rooted in community and transformation.

Also in collaboration with Performance, Theater, and Dance, the CAH co-sponsored *Broadway Boîte*, a joyful evening of musical theater and cabaret directed by Jim Thurston and performed by Colby students and local community members. The event affirmed the role of performance as a space for connection, expression, and shared joy.

We supported *Margaret's Place*, a queer pop-up and archival installation honoring Provost Margaret McFadden on the occasion of her retirement. Organized by the Queerly Beloved faculty-staff group, the project celebrated decades of queer life and labor at Colby by tracing the personal and collective histories that shape campus life. We are particularly indebted to the Special Collections and Archives team of the Colby Libraries for their role in keeping our histories recorded and alive.

Invited speakers drew full audiences throughout the year, and we were happy to play a small role in bringing them. As part of the Goldfarb Center's *In the News* series, journalist Dexter Thomas and climate advocate Ayanna Elizabeth Johnson offered timely conversations on media, activism, and the environment. Each event drew over a hundred students, turning current events into lively public dialogue. And the visit of cartoonist and MacArthur Fellow Lynda Barry, hosted by the Creative Writing department, invited students to explore how storytelling, drawing, and humor open doors to creativity and connection.

Across these projects, the CAH continued to support work that engages urgent questions with imagination and care, bringing the campus community together around shared challenges, local legacies, and new ways of seeing.





Community Partnerships

For over a decade, the Center for the Arts and Humanities has cultivated meaningful partnerships with our Waterville neighbors, supporting the arts and humanities both on and off campus. Through annual themes, public programming, and collaborative events, we help foster a vibrant creative culture in downtown Waterville.

This year, our work with Waterville Creates, the Maine Film Center, and the Waterville Public Library was especially robust, anchored by a multi-part, community-wide celebration in the lead-up to the visit of bestselling author and video essayist John Green. In collaboration with these partners, we supported an interactive exhibit at the Schupf Arts Center in downtown Waterville, community reading groups of Green's work, and a free public screening of *The Fault in*

Our Stars at the Maine Film Center. These joint efforts highlighted the incredible work we can do together.

Our long-standing relationship with Waterville Creates continued to grow through support for three key initiatives: *SLICE*, the *Youth Arts Access Fund*, and programming at the Maine Film Center.

SLICE (Students Learning Innovative Creative Endeavors) offers local students a behind-the-scenes look at careers in the creative economy. In May, Waterville Creates piloted a new *SLICE* field trip with 22 students from Waterville Senior High School. After meeting with staff from across the city's cultural institutions, students participated in a hands-on special effects makeup workshop led by Rilee Elliot, where they learned how to craft realistic theatrical bruises. In the coming

year, the program will expand to include other downtown venues such as Greene Block + Studios and the Waterville Public Library.

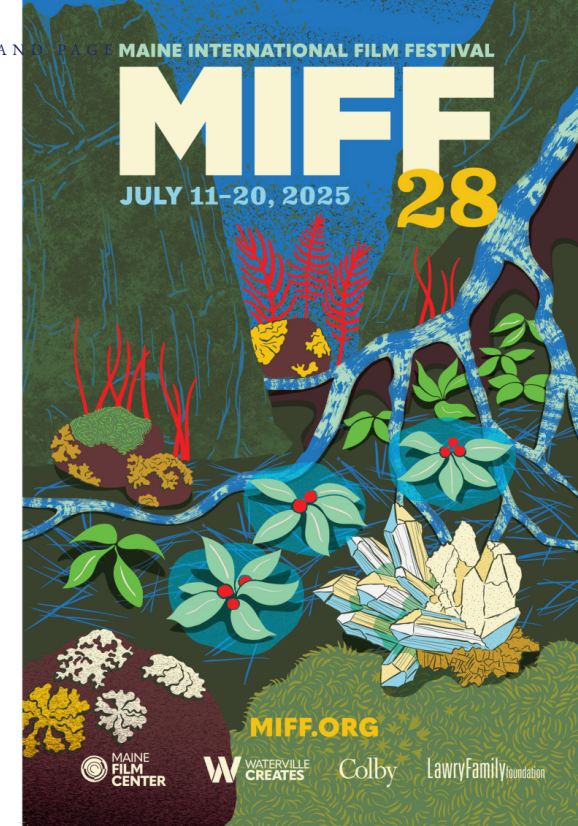
The Youth Arts Access Fund (YAAF), launched by Waterville Creates in 2022, continues to grow with impressive reach. Designed to eliminate financial barriers for youth under 18, the fund provides free access to a wide range of arts experiences. In 2025 alone, nearly 750 youth have participated in programs totaling \$383,000 in value. Since its launch, YAAF has been used 5,595 times, providing over \$216,000 in free access to plays, movies, art classes, theater camps, and more. Public awareness has grown as well: in the 2024 Community Survey, 78% of respondents had heard of the fund—up from 32% in 2022.

Our partnership with the Maine Film Center (MFC) continues to be a cornerstone of our community engagement. As a venue sponsor of the 27th annual Maine International Film Festival (MIFF) in July, the CAH and our summer interns at MIFF helped welcome filmmakers and audiences from over 40 countries for a ten-day celebration of cinema. MIFF honored renowned directors Mary Harron (*American Psycho*) and Jos Stelling (*Natasja's Dance*) with achievement awards. Working as student Production Assistants, the CAH summer interns gained meaningful professional experience in a high-profile arts setting.

In addition to MIFF, the Film Center's Cinema Explorations series—its winter matinee program curated by local film lovers—welcomed its highest-ever attendance this January through March. With support from the CAH, the five-part series was offered free to the public, reinforcing our shared goal of expanding access to the arts.

Through these deep partnerships, the Center for the Arts and Humanities affirms its long-standing investment in Waterville as a creative hub. We are proud to continue creating and bringing collaborations that spark curiosity, amplify local voices, and build bridges between Colby and the broader community.

Photography by Joel Page





Ashley Renée Watkins-Alston bursts into song in *Post Pardon: An Opera in Concert*, created by Colby professor Arisa White (librettist) and composed by Jessica Jones. Supported in part by the CAH, *Post Pardon* is a bold and affecting work that fuses avant-garde improvisation, soul-stirring melodies, and a jazz-informed sonic palette. Conducted by Mazz Swift and musically directed by Marshunda Smith, the performance features a dynamic cast led by three standout vocalists: Watkins-Alston, a powerhouse multi-genre artist; Jeannine Anderson, a versatile operatic and theater performer; and Kay Patterson, a luminous lyric soprano.

Photo by Gregory Rec

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