

# Humanities Newsletter

October | 2017

In this issue: Dean's Message; Communication Chair Danielle Endres; Linguistics Student Joselyn Rodriguez; and Paul Reeve announced as the First Simmons Mormon Studies Professor

# DEAN'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

As many of you know, I will be leaving the University of Utah at the end of October to take up a new post, serving as a Senior Program Officer for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York starting on November 1. Serving as Dean of the College of Humanities has truly been one of the greatest honors of my life. Over these past two years, I've learned more than I can possibly say from the faculty, staff, and students in our college. Working with them, and with colleagues across this stunningly beautiful campus has reinforced for me several important points:

First, a humanities education is of greater value and importance now than ever before. No matter what path our students plan to take after graduation, the work they do in our classrooms, majors, and minors better prepares them for the challenges that lie ahead.

Second, the above-mentioned challenges may be greater than those faced by any prior generation. Students who graduate with a degree in the humanities will be absolutely essential in the effort to grapple with those challenges. The skills they take with them when they leave our college will ideally position them to lead, to solve, and to innovate.

Third, there is no better place for students to acquire a humanities education than the University of Utah. This university is truly on the rise, and its growing strength is palpable. We may encounter bumps in the road along the way as we climb, because every public university today faces extraordinary challenges. But the University of Utah is rapidly rising in the national rankings while remaining one of the most affordable research-extensive public universities in the nation. Our students graduate with among the lowest debt rates in the nation, and with an outstanding, research-informed education that will take them wherever they choose to go after they graduate.

I could go on and on, but I'll close with this: I've felt such pride and it has truly been a privilege to have been part of this institution, and honored to work alongside the exceptionally committed faculty, staff and students of our college and beyond. The devotion of our many thousands of alumni has meant more than I can say, and I thank you most sincerely for your support and generosity. The University of Utah and the College of Humanities will always hold a special place in my heart. I look forward to watching it grow with the guidance of future leaders in the years ahead.

Wishing you peace,

Dianne

## FACULTY FEATURE



**Danielle Endres**  
Chair | Communication

Dr. Danielle Endres came to the College of Humanities in the Fall of 2005 and is now Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication.

Dr. Endres earned her Ph.D. in Communication at the University of Washington

in 2005, where she specialized in the relationship between rhetoric and the environment. In her recent research she has analyzed nuclearism in the American West (also known as the “Atomic” West).

Her position at the University of Utah, she says, gives her the opportunity to teach students that have grown up “with little to no knowledge of the relationship between the nuclear production complex and the American West.” She especially enjoys teaching students about the histories of nuclear fallout in small communities and the effects of nuclear testing and storage on the Beehive State. “Being located in Utah has allowed me to supplement classroom education with field-based educational opportunities such as a tour of the Nevada Test Site, visiting the energy solutions low-level nuclear waste facility, and visiting the Skull Valley Reservation to talk with Margene Bullcreek who opposed the proposed PFS nuclear waste site.” These opportunities allow her to introduce students to people that have experienced the effects of nuclear industrialization and testing firsthand, which leaves an indelible print on the minds of her students. She takes special joy in hearing about her students’ experiences speaking to relatives about nuclear issues and the environment in Utah as they report their experiences in classroom discussion.

We look forward to the continuation of her excellent teaching and research as she begins her service as Chair of the Communication Department.

## ALUMNI FEATURE

**Peter Watkins**

B.A. | 2001 Mass Communication  
President, Watkins Global  
Strategies, Salt Lake City

Peter has always been interested in politics and media, so after graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Communication in 2001, and working as a media intern in Senator Orrin Hatch’s office, he found himself moving to Washington D.C. for a volunteer

position. After a year of answering the phones in the White House press office, he was hired full time and stayed for the next several years. Peter worked his way up to eventually serving as a White House spokesman during George W. Bush’s presidency. He served in various communication-related capacities over a five-year span, including deputy press secretary for First Lady Laura Bush. Peter said during that time, he went from fielding media questions about the Iraq War to organizing the White House Easter Egg Roll.

While serving as a Press Assistant to the President, Peter was the liaison between the White House and all visiting foreign media delegations, while also being a principal point of contact for the White House press corps.

[Read more](#)



# STUDENT FEATURE

## Joselyn Rodriguez

Undergraduate | Linguistics

Joselyn Rodriguez, a senior in Linguistics, has been interested in languages her entire life. Her realization that language is both “logical and systematic” taught her to examine words, sentences, and texts as puzzles she could take apart and examine piece by piece. She points to her father’s Spanish speaking (he

is Chilean) as a springboard from which she began to develop her language skills, even if she didn’t realize it at the time. The more languages she has learned (she is also minoring in Korean Studies), the more she has recognized that she is interested in how languages work.

Joselyn values her humanities education for many reasons, but foremost among them are the relationships and connections she makes with her professors and classmates. “Courses in the Humanities have always been more personal to me than any courses I have taken in different colleges. Classes are smaller, allowing for more interaction with faculty,” she says. Furthermore, she has found that students in the Humanities tend to enjoy this communicative and deeply interactive form of learning. She loves the collaboration and discussion that begins in the classroom but that extends to her personal thinking far beyond campus.

“There really is a warmth to the humanities that I can’t quite describe. I am grateful that I am a part of this community of students and professors.” After completing her undergraduate degree in Linguistics, Joselyn plans to pursue a graduate degree, also in Linguistics. She is particularly interested in becoming an expert on Natural Language Processing and Understanding, a field at the center of computer science, artificial intelligence, and linguistics.

Using the skills she has developed in the College of Humanities at the University of Utah, Joselyn hopes to enter graduate school with the desire to research at an institution that would support her interest in “syntax, phonology, semantics, and their application in natural language processing to help further technological developments in human-computer interaction, artificial intelligence, and machine translation.” Joselyn’s future is bright—we cannot wait to hear from her in future years to learn more about how Humanities at the University of Utah gave her “the edge!”



# NEWS

## The College of Humanities has appointed Paul Reeve as the First Simmons Mormon Studies Professor

The University of Utah's College of Humanities has appointed Paul Reeve, professor of History, as the first Simmons Mormon Studies professor.

"With the appointment of Paul, the U has moved into the front rank of schools engaged in the vibrant, intellectual exploration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, its institutions, history and people," said Bob Goldberg, director of the U's Tanner Humanities Center, which houses the Mormon studies initiative. "He will help advance our goals of fostering understanding, respect and tolerance while expanding the breadth and depth of our program."

Reeve, who received his doctorate in History from the U, teaches courses on Utah history, Mormon history and the history of the Western U.S. His most recent book, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* received the Mormon History Association's Best Book Award, the John Whitmer Historical Association's Smith-Pettit Best Book Award and the Utah State Historical Society's Francis Armstrong Madsen Best History Book Award.

"I am honored to hold the Simmons Mormon Studies Professorship and am especially pleased for what it means for the progression of Mormon studies at the U," said Reeve. "The professorship elevates the status of an already strong Mormon Studies initiative and helps to solidify the U's position as a leader in the field."

The appointment will allow Reeve to continue his research and begin a new digital history project, "A Century of Black Mormons." The project seeks to build a digital database that names all identifiable black Mormons baptized into the faith between 1830 and 1930 and document their existence through primary source research. The database will become publicly available, including the primary source documentation.

"Because of the LDS church's racial policy, from the 1850s to 1978, which restricted black male priesthood ordination and black male and female temple admission, public perception, both among Mormons and outsiders, sometimes suggests that there were no black Mormons until after 1978. This digital history project is designed to

correct that perception and to recover the names and lives of black Mormons who have been erased from collective Mormon memory. Their lives matter and their names deserve to be known," said Reeve.

In many regards the digital project is a spin-off from his book, *Religion of a Different Color* which tells the Mormon racial story in all of its complexity. The book documents the lives of early black priesthood holders and other black pioneers.

"As I gave book talks across the country to various audiences, people frequently wanted to know how many black Mormons there were. No scholar to date has tried to systematically answer that question. This professorship will allow me to do just that," added Reeve.

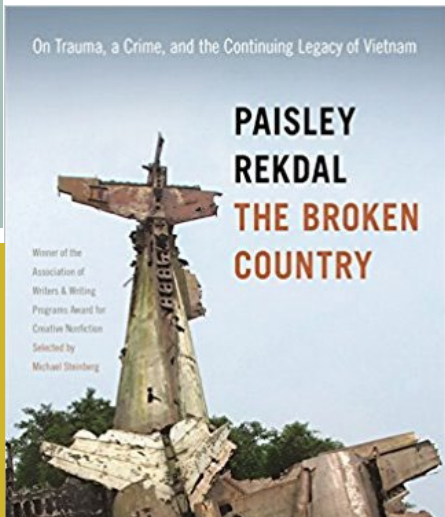
Reeve will build on an already strong foundation of Mormon Studies at the U. In 2010, the Tanner Humanities Center launched its Mormon Studies initiative to expand opportunities for academic examination of the LDS church and offers a graduate research fellowship. Beyond that, the J. Willard Marriott Library houses one of the most significant and important collections in the West on the historic development of the LDS church and its people.

Reeve's professorship is made possible by the generosity of the David E. and Melinda K. Simmons Foundation.

**"The College of Humanities is incredibly grateful to the David E. and Melinda K. Simmons Foundation," said Dianne Harris, dean of the College of Humanities. "Their vision will make a lasting contribution to expanding our knowledge and understanding of the history of the LDS church, positively impacting students for generations to come. Their gift has opened new avenues for scholarship and pedagogy. We can't thank them enough for making this new Mormon Studies Professorship possible."**



# NEWS



## **Linguistics Undergraduate Student Analyzes the Language of Two Presidential Executive Orders**

“Language is a powerful force in the creation of culture,” says Lauren Brocius, who is double majoring in Linguistics and Asian Studies and volunteering as a research assistant with the U’s Center for Research on Migration & Refugee Integration (CRMRI). “In many ways, language is shaped by cultural values of a particular group, but there is also a deep relationship between the cultivation of cultural values as a direct result of language. When the language being circulated is violent and hateful, then the culture also becomes a culture of violence and hate. And culture, as the total sum of values and behaviors of a specific group of people, leads directly to actions and reactions which, in many cases, can be explosive.”

[Read More.](#)

## **Paisley Rekdal’s New Book on the Continuing Legacy of Vietnam**

Paisley Rekdal, Professor of English, has published a new book titled *The Broken Country: On Trauma, a Crime, and the Continuing Legacy of Vietnam*, through University of Georgia Press. *The Broken Country* uses a violent incident that took place in Salt Lake City in 2012 as a springboard for examining the long-term cultural and psychological effects of the Vietnam War. [Read More.](#)

## **David Roh Accepted to Participate in NEH Workshop “Object Lessons”**

David Roh, Assistant Professor of English, has been accepted to participate in a workshop funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The workshop, titled “Object Lessons” is designed and run by two scholars, Ian Bogost and Christopher Schaberg, who edit a book and essay series on everyday objects, written for a general audience. Their expertise is in bridging Digital Humanities and the public, and the workshop is meant to help participants shape their project and writing for a wider audience than a strictly academic readership.

[Read More.](#)



Our theme for the year reflects a powerful truth: **Humanities Gives You the Edge.** Alumni of Humanities not only lead lives of extraordinary fulfillment, but they also excel at whatever they do. Our thousands of alumni unanimously tell us that **Humanities gave them the edge** that helped them succeed as excellent communicators; multi-lingual and culturally sophisticated global citizens; critical, ethical, and logical thinkers; and outstanding creative partners. And research backs this up! Studies show that Humanities students find careers that provide financial security and job satisfaction that matches those of students in nearly every other major. Employers increasingly seek employees who have strong skills learned in Humanities (writing, problem solving, listening, speaking, critical thinking, etc.). Humanities gives people the edge they need to thrive today. How does Humanities give YOU the edge?

## GIVE TO THE HUMANITIES

Your contributions provide scholarships for students, help develop new programs, and fund innovative research that keeps this college on the cutting edge.

[humanities.utah.edu/giving.php](http://humanities.utah.edu/giving.php)

