

HUMANITIES CENTER FACULTY FELLOWSHIP COMPETITION 2021 - 2022

Fear and Fragility in the COVID-19 Era



Artwork by Maggie Chiang

The virus causes panic among many, and disdain among others, and while masks become a cry for war, more than 600,000 people are buried in lonely graves. The crisis mirrors the results of misinformation campaigns and rushed vaccines seen during the Great Influenza of 1918-1920, and makes it abundantly clear in Detroit and elsewhere that one hundred years of technological advances were not matched by the equivalent progress in social justice.

In our present context we see multiple examples of fear and fragility: politically inflamed rhetoric polarizes the country; Islam is feared while domestic terrorists brandish guns, plot the kidnapping of Michigan's governor and storm the capitol wearing horned hats and professing faith in QAnon; racial diversity leads to sharp schisms between whites and blacks/browns and there is reciprocal distrust among all racial and ethnic segments of our population. Additionally, women demand their well-deserved and past due respect and challenge the position of overpaid men. Both sexes feel fragilized in times when heteronormative rules are challenged by fluid gender identities.

In times of confinement, generations clash as never before: "boomers" criticize "those lazy millennials"; emotionally detached GenXers try to get along with neighbors, while mildly concerned with their seemingly gender-neutral and entitled Gen Z children, already born holding cell phones in their hands. Clearly, the promised beauty of a more diverse and equalitarian society does not come free from confusion and angst. This "today" is marked by discord and a general feeling of fear and fragility rarely seen so clearly in ruling majorities, but certainly shared by the challenging minorities. Society at large seems to have lost its most elevated search for meaning. Alas, "in chaos nobody is a citizen"¹ and the world belongs to those who "damn the torpedoes"² and go full speed ahead – even if in fear of their own accomplishments.

Engaging in our own fear and sense of fragility breaks us down to our most vulnerable core, exposes our deepest societal truths and eliminates our trusted defenses. Dissecting this age through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary lenses including anthropologic, artistic, economic, historic, linguistic, psychologic, political, legal, sociologic, or technological viewpoints will lead to a greater understanding of these truths, turning them into the action of transforming fear and fragility into hope and growth.

The Humanities Center invites proposals that address all fears and fragilities discernible in this COVID era, including those exemplified above. All full-time faculty in the humanities, arts, and humanistic social sciences are eligible to apply, except those faculty who received this fellowship within the last two years.

Please apply online at: <https://forms.wayne.edu/5db2f287e0592/>

1. Herbert Vianna in the 2002 song "The Calibre"
2. Attributed to Admiral David Farragut (1801-1870)

Deadline:

Friday, March 25, 2022

All WSU full-time faculty in the humanities, arts, and related disciplines are eligible to submit proposals, except those who received a Faculty Fellowship Award from the Center within the last two years

The submission guidelines for this competition and the cover page are available on our website at <https://research2.wayne.edu/hum/>

The Center will fund about eight proposals with up to \$6,000 each. Results of the competition will be announced within a month of the closing date. Recipients will be expected to present their findings to date at a Faculty Fellows Conference to be scheduled in April 2023.

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For more info about the Humanities Center, call (313) 577-5471 or visit <https://research2.wayne.edu/hum/>

