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UM Professor Receives Prestigious Humanities Without Walls Funding

Caroline Wigginton and colleagues to study how indigenous art and activism exert rights to homelands

MARCH 29, 2018 BY EDWIN B. SMITH



Caroline Wigginton

OXFORD, Miss. – A **University of Mississippi English** professor has been awarded funding from Humanities Without Walls as part of a collaborative team that will study how indigenous art and activism affect Native Americans claims to their homelands.

Caroline Wigginton, assistant professor of English, is project consultant and UM workshop director for an interdisciplinary team of junior and senior scholars from multiple institutions on “Indigenous Art and Activism in Changing Climates: The Mississippi River Valley, Colonialism and Environmental Change.”

The three-year project focuses on the shifting environmental, political, economic and racial climates that define the Mississippi River’s course, meanings and relation to Native peoples. It will focus on how indigenous art and activism maintain intellectual traditions and exert continued rights to homelands, constituting strategies of persistence and resistance.

Wigginton is collaborating with Kelly Wisecup, associate professor of English at Northwestern University and principal investigator for the study, along with co-principal investigators Vincente Diaz and Christopher Pexa, both on the faculty at the University of Minnesota.

“In addition to co-organizing with Kelly, Vince and Chris, I’m in charge of planning and hosting our workshop here in Oxford and the surrounding region in fall 2019,” Wigginton said. “We’ll visit the Chucalissa Indian Village in Memphis and take a tour of the Delta that focuses on its Native American past and present.

“Robbie Ethridge, professor of anthropology, will provide her expertise while here and help introduce project participants to our university’s Southeastern Native archaeology collection. We’ll give presentations to undergraduate classes and other interested members of the UM community.”

The four researchers will co-organize the entire project, which includes putting together a reading list, making collaborative research visits to Chicago, Minneapolis and Oxford, sharing individual research projects, connecting their undergraduate and graduate classes across institutions, presenting their research projects in a public symposium and putting together a publication.

“The Department of English and the **College of Liberal Arts** have a lot of expertise in Southern Native American studies, and this project will help showcase our important work outside our local region,” Wigginton said. “I hope that this project will demonstrate that future humanities projects thinking about the Mississippi River Valley will be enriched by the strong work being done here at the **University of Mississippi** by our faculty.”

The project received \$138,360 from Humanities Without Walls, a consortium of humanities centers and institutes at 15 major research universities throughout the Midwest and beyond. Faculty and graduate student collaborators from UM, Northwestern, Minnesota as well as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Iowa and University of Maine also will join the project.

“We’re challenging ourselves to choose unfamiliar objects of study and develop new, collaborative methodologies by locating our workshops at different sites along the river valley and directly engaging with the river and multiple indigenous contexts,” Wisecup said. “We will also create class assignments that incorporate these project methods and themes.

“Undergraduates will develop their own research in online collaborations with parallel classes at partner institutions and learn from our experience with this collaborative process.”

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children’s play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith’s Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school’s first African-American student.

Ole Miss administrators anticipate several benefits from the collaboration.

“Dr. Wigginton is to be commended for bringing this opportunity to our university and the English department,” said Ivo Kamps, chair and professor of English. “The Humanities Without Walls grant will not only enhance and further her research, but will also weave the University of Mississippi into a broader network of top-notch universities that should generate mutual benefits well beyond the grant itself.”

Lee M. Cohen, dean of liberal arts, said he expects that additional scholarship and teaching opportunities will emerge as a result of this project.

“Partnering as an institution with the Midwestern Humanities Without Walls Consortium provides additional visibility to UM as a top-tier research university, one that collaborates with other R1 universities to produce field-transforming research,” Cohen said.

“By forging connections among our faculty and students across a variety of disciplines with well-regarded Big 10 universities such as Northwestern, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois, important interpersonal and inter-institutional collaborations will be established.”

Wigginton received her both her master’s and doctoral degrees in English from the University of Texas. She also holds undergraduate degrees in English and biochemistry from Ohio State University.

An American Council of Learned Societies’ Carl and Betty Pforzheimer Fellow, Wigginton pursues a number of teaching and research interests, including American literature to 1865, Native American literatures, gender and sexuality studies, transatlantic 18th century studies, religion, race and culture, and material culture studies.

Funded by \$7.2 million in grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Humanities Without Walls aims to create new avenues for collaborative cross-institutional research, teaching and scholarship in the humanities.

For more about the UM Department of English, visit <http://english.olemiss.edu/>.

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“James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier,” a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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