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**KEYNOTE ADDRESS:**
“Languages in Danger: Why Should We Care?”
Lenore Grenoble, John Matthews Manly Distinguished Service Professor in Linguistics

Registration is required. For more information, to see the full schedule, or to request assistance, please call 773.702.7423 or visit humanitiesday.uchicago.edu.
The Mystery of G. W. F. Hegel
Philosopher Sally Sedgwick investigates one of the field’s most challenging thinkers.

Teaching Community
Alumni find the right fit in the community college classroom.

Language Artists
A conversation about teaching and learning second languages.

Animal Studies 101
Two views of a burgeoning field.

FROM THE DEAN
Dear Alumni and Friends,

At the University of Chicago, we take great pride in the fact that the most senior members of our faculty teach and advise students at all levels—from incoming undergraduates to doctoral candidates. Our students benefit, and so do the faculty members whose research is enriched by teaching. As any instructor will tell you, the opportunity to exchange ideas with a thoughtful group of students can prompt new insights and reveal surprising interpretations; a class in which the participants connect on multiple levels can be one of life’s most rewarding experiences, for both instructor and student.

This winter I will teach in the undergraduate Core for the first time since I became dean. In contrast to previous years, when I mostly taught seminars related to my expertise in Akkadian, I will be one of several faculty members leading a section of Reading Cultures—a yearlong sequence that uses literary and visual texts to explore how cultures transform. This will be a new course for me; in fact, I read some of the syllabus materials for the first time this past summer. Yet it presents an exciting opportunity to cover subjects outside my research area, to hone my skills as an instructor, to engage with a new group of students, and to ask vital questions relevant to all humanities fields.

The emphasis UChicago places on introductory courses and senior scholars teaching in the Core demonstrates our commitment to building the foundational knowledge that is critical for our students’ success. In my elementary Akkadian course, students learn the cuneiform signs and basic grammar that allow them to read the texts and understand the nuances of these ancient documents. Similarly, first-year College students in Reading Cultures confront works of all kinds from different eras—folktales, novels, films, music—to develop the skills of interpretation and close reading that are crucial to humanities scholarship and to their future endeavors beyond the University.

We train the strongest scholars and citizens by giving them the strongest foundations. In this issue of Tableau you will find examples of students, faculty members, and alumni who are making distinctive contributions as teachers and researchers. Whether they work in a suburban community college, an archive in Berlin, or our campus language laboratory, they share a dedication to the pursuit of knowledge and to making an impact on the world. And for many of us, that pursuit begins when we engage with, inspire, and learn from the next generation of University of Chicago students.

With best wishes,

Martha T. Roth
Dean of the Division of the Humanities

ON THE COVER
A scene from The Misanthrope by Molière, performed at Court Theatre in 2013. Court’s debut season in 1955 featured three Molière plays translated by French professor Richard d’Anjou—an example of the collaboration with Humanities faculty that has continued over six decades (see page 12).
LIKE MANY AMERICAN GIRLS, philosopher Sally Sedgwick, AM’81, PhD’85, grew up reading Nancy Drew. By the time she graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz, she had trained in teen detective mysteries for a different type of puzzle: philosophy. “It’s the same thing, for grown-ups,” says Sedgwick, who was an English major before landing in an intro philosophy class. Intrigued by issues of human reason—and impressed by the intellect of the department’s only female professor—she switched her focus.

Sedgwick, the Liberal Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and affiliated professor of Germanic Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, has since made a career of deciphering complex ideas. A specialist in the history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought, she investigates the work of German theorists Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel, the latter of whom Bertrand Russell once described as “the hardest to understand of the great philosophers.”

Sedgwick pieces together Hegel’s scattered clues to make sense of what’s going on in his work—and to persuade scholars to give the notoriously abstract philosopher another look. Her 2012 book, Hegel’s Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity (Oxford University Press), for example, grapples with gaps Hegel saw in his predecessor’s thought. The journal Mind praised Sedgwick for setting “a new standard for re-search on the relation of Kant and Hegel.”

Now Sedgwick is focusing her efforts squarely on Hegel, splitting time between Chicago and Berlin on a Fulbright research fellowship to study the role of women in Hegel’s thought. She became aware of gaps in past notions of rights and encountered conflicts generated by those conceptions. Hegel outlines this development, Sedgwick says, finding “traces of the idea in the Christian tradition.”

Philosophy, if it is working correctly, should wean all of us of the idea that anything is simple. —Sally Sedgwick, AM’81, PhD’85

FIND RECOMMENDED READINGS and listen to a podcast with Sally Sedgwick at tableau.uchicago.edu/hegel.

Sedgwick at home in Chicago. A specialist in German philosophy, she has made a career of deciphering complex ideas.
“What we’ve always looking for is someone who loves teaching,” says Rosie Banks, AM’99, PhD’12, associate dean of instruction at Harold Washington College in downtown Chicago. Community college instructors are expected to teach multiple sections of their courses every semester, serve on faculty committees, and hold office hours for their students. The teaching load can be four or five courses per semester for tenured faculty like Jason Evans, AM’02, an English professor at Prairie State College in south suburban Chicago Heights.

Evans, a graduate of the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities (MAPH) who earned a PhD in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago, teaches composition and literature. He advises MAPH students who take his UChicago course Teaching at Community Colleges “to draw on your education, not your expertise.” Professors at community colleges teach a wide variety of classes that may not be directly related to their graduate school specialization. “Be prepared to do more than your specific field,” says Evans.

Most community colleges accept any student with a high school diploma or a GED. “We are open and accessible to anyone who walks through our doors,” says Banks. This policy produces an intellectually and demographically diverse student body. The average student at Prairie State is 29 years old, says Evans, and teaching an adult student population means that the goals of each student differ as well: some are interested in an associate’s degree, others in a four-year university, while still others are there for the traditional college student.”

Babinec is now an adjunct instructor at suburban Moraine Valley Community College and Harper Community College. She’s one of many alumni who have found careers as adjunct instructors, tenured professors, and administrators at such institutions—which, according to the American Association of Community Colleges, serve nearly half of all undergraduates in the United States.

Alumni find the right fit in the community college classroom.

BY TOM POPELKA

We are open and accessible to anyone who walks through our doors.
—Rosie Banks, AM’99, PhD’12

READ CAREER ADVICE from alumni at tableau.uchicago.edu/community.
A conversation about teaching and learning second languages.

INTERVIEW BY
ELIZABETH STATION

Students from the College, graduate divisions, and professional schools account for nearly 5,000 enrollments in language courses taught by a talented corps of lecturers and tenure-track faculty. In 2007 the Division established the University of Chicago Language Center to support their efforts and encourage innovative, interactive language pedagogy on and beyond the campus.

With the advent of multimedia and web-based tools and easier access to speakers all over the world, language teaching and learning have moved in new directions. Four longtime instructors spoke with Tableau about their work: Whitney Cox, AM’06, PhD’06, an associate professor in South Asian Languages and Civilizations who teaches Sanskrit, Noha Forster, a lecturer in Arabic and modern languages coordinator in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations; Ana Maria Lima, senior lecturer and Portuguese language coordinator in Romance Languages and Literatures; and Alice McLean, AM’86, a lecturer in French and Portuguese in Romance Languages and Literatures.

How has language instruction changed since you started teaching?

Noha Forster: I started teaching Arabic at the University in 2002, and we had a relatively small program. But more and more, we found that incoming freshmen had already had two or three years of Arabic in high school. We quickly had to understand this reality and react to it by creating courses at the advanced level.

Ana Maria Lima: The internet has changed the game. We now have online access to things that in the past I would have had to travel to Brazil and bring back: menus, supermarket fliers, videos, magazines, CDs. Our approach, the communicative approach, is to use as many authentic materials as we possibly can. We want to teach the language that people actually speak and use.

What things have not changed about language teaching? What’s hard for students?

Noha Forster: The first and second—and probably the third and fourth—year of Sanskrit are such a slog. But that moment of conveying the pure joy of Sanskrit is the best part of my job.

What is most satisfying to you as a language teacher?

Noha Forster: I love when students finally grasp a concept that has been so elusive for them. I love being in the classroom when students are producing more, talking among themselves, and you see the community forming. I love that.

Alice McLean: My colleagues and I have noticed a shift toward authenticity. We want to make the language more real, to make it accessible in authentic ways.

What does the emphasis on speaking proficiency mean in the classroom?

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Animal Studies, described by a 2009 Chronicle of Higher Education article as “a force to be reckoned with in philosophy, literary and cultural studies, history, and other fields with a traditionally anthropocentric bent,” is nonetheless difficult to define.

Here’s an attempt: animal studies focuses on the interaction of humans and animals while questioning anthropocentric bias.

As for origins, some scholars point to Peter Singer’s Animal Liberation or Carol Adams’s The Sexual Politics of Meat (both from 1975) as starting points; others look to Jacques Derrida’s 2008 essay “a force to be reckoned with in philosophy, literary and cultural studies, history, and other fields with a traditionally anthropocentric bent.”

My work centers on animals in the literature and philosophy of eighteenth-century British writing. In some ways, this is an old topic. There’s a lot of existing work on fables and symbols, in which animals stand in for something else: Women poets use animals to figure their own constrained possibilities; animals also come into debates around slavery. My interest—and the interest of animal studies—is to get out from under that familiar analysis and wonder what these writers might have actually known about animals.

My interest started when I was living in London in 2001. I was struck by what a national trauma the foot-and-mouth crisis was in Britain. Around the same time I read J. M. Coetzee’s Disgrace, which is about political problems in South Africa but centers on dogs. Coetzee has been very influential in animal studies.

Animal studies at the time didn’t really exist. I remember writing my proposal to get into graduate school and my adviser saying, “Well, no one will accuse you of being fashionable.” I was here for a couple of years, and suddenly animal studies became a thing.

Right now the field of animal studies is messy and in formation. At UChicago we have a really great interdisciplinary workshop, but the membership doesn’t really extend to the biological sciences. At some universities, animal studies is centered on the hard sciences and includes only a few token ethicists from the humanities. The terminology hasn’t been settled yet: “critical animal studies” versus “animal studies” versus “animal studies.” The fractures matter to some people but not others.

I teach two animal studies courses. The Lives of Animals covers eighteenth-century literature and philosophy with some contemporary theory. One of the big narratives about animal studies turns on Descartes. He’s the bad guy; the oversimplified version of his work is that animals are just automatons. We also cover what was a flourishing genre in the eighteenth century: the life stories of all kinds of animals and inanimate objects. It reads like children’s literature now, but it didn’t start out that way.

My other course, The Animal: Theories of Nonhuman Life, is not historically specific. I’ve taught everything from Virginia Woolf’s Flush, her biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel, to films like Sam Fuller’s White Woman, about a dog who’s trained to attack black people and a bandit who is trained by him. It’s clearly about dogs but also disturbing and pulpy, and students don’t know what to make of it.

I didn’t grow up with animals at all; I’m uncomfortable around them. I like cats but am very allergic. I wrote an essay a couple of years ago for a semidecenario academic journal, and the editors really wanted me to frame the argument with my personal experiences with animals. That’s not the way into this for me.

My dissertation, which I’m just wrapping up, is on authors of grotesque short prose around 1900. These authors look to nonhuman figures—plants, animals—and to marginalized human figures to understand what it means to be a human in the modern world. It’s a shift of perspective that allows them to show how human behavior can be grotesque and also to avoid censor-ship. They used plants to talk obliquely about homosexuality, for example.

While working on this literature I realized I had to think more about plants and animals. I discovered animal studies around 2011 and, some time later, that there were other people doing it at UChicago—In English, Classics, the Divinity School. So we formed a reading group to try to tackle the field together. We read Genesis, Darwin, Kafka. Eventually the reading group became a workshop and began to invite speakers.

There have been a lot of people working on animals on their own for a really long time. When I was asked if animal studies is the latest fad in academia, I can point to this history. But if you read texts from 10 or 12 years ago, you can notice that the writers hedge a lot more, that they explain why they’re doing what they’re doing. In more recent texts, that doesn’t happen as much. There’s the consciousness of a discipline.

Last spring I helped organize a conference, Why Do Animal Studies? We felt like that question hadn’t been asked by animal studies scholars, whereas people outside the field ask us all the time. We had over 60 paper submissions, the majority of them from faculty, and more than 90 people registered to attend.

Animal studies has various corners, which all have their own answers to that question of why. The ethical approach is the most clear: we need to take better care of animals, be it as companion species or other species next to humans. For someone like me who does literary animal studies, the question is much harder. I would say looking through someone else’s eyes is always an enlightening exercise. The way we represent animals tells us a lot about the human relationship to others and to ourselves.

The University of Chicago Press is actually working on a book of critical terms for animal studies, and the members of our workshop met with them about it. It was really interesting to center on aterm and discuss it. But if you read texts from 10 or 12 years ago, you can notice that the writers hedge a lot more, that they explain why they’re doing what they’re doing. In more recent texts, that doesn’t happen as much. There’s the consciousness of a discipline.

My colleagues in other fields sometimes assume animal studies people must all be vegan, have pets, or work for animal shelters. And some do. In the workshop we have a wide range of ethical and political commitments to animals. The lines are more complicated and blurred than one might expect.

I have a cat, but I write about dogs, which confuses people—and they always ask, ‘Is it something that happens in a lot of disciplines’—the assumption that men can’t do gender studies, or Christians can’t do Jewish studies. I think it’s healthy to have a little bit of a distance, though I probably wouldn’t know more about dogs if I had one. I’d have a different kind of knowledge.

Heather Keenleyside, AM’93, PhD’08, an assistant professor in English Language and Literature, has taught at UChicago since 2008. Her book Animals and Other People: Fictions of Life in Eighteenth-Century Literature is forthcoming.

Joela Jacobs, a graduate student in Germanic Studies, is working on her dissertation, “Speaking the Non-Human: Plants, Animals, and Marginalized Humans in Literary Grotesques from Oskar Panizza to Franz Kafka.”

ANIMAL STUDIES
Two views of a burgeoning field.

AS TOLD TO CARRIE GOLUS, AB’91, AM’93

ILLUSTRATION BY JEN LOBO

FIND RECOMMENDED READINGS at tableau.uchicago.edu/animal.
The arts, particularly the visual arts, have a significant influence on contemporary culture. The University of Chicago contributes to this movement by welcoming new faculty members who bring unique perspectives to the academic landscape.

Theater Gates joins the Visual Arts faculty as Assistant Professor after teaching in the department and serving the University in various capacities since 2017. His role is to expand the curriculum and engage students in the College and the Division’s MFA program. His art exhibitions and public installations focus on exploring the intersections between art and social justice.

Timothy Harrison is a specialist in the Renaissance and early modern periods. As an Instructor in English Language and Literature, he will begin his appointment as Assistant Professor in January 2021. His dissertation, “Rijms van Sententie in Early Modernity,” examines how authors including Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton depicted the feeling of being alive. His research interests include undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Toronto, and he has completed his PhD in English and book history and print culture. His article “Athic Awakening and the Feeling of Being Alive in Paradise Lost” (Milton Studies 54, 2013) won the Milton Society of America’s Albert C. Labriola Award.

Zachary Samalin joins the English Language and Literature faculty as Assistant Professor after completing his PhD at the CUNY Graduate Center, where he received a Mellon/ACLS dissertation completion fellowship, and his BA at Johns Hopkins. He received the CUNY faculty’s annual prize for his dissertation, “The Masses Are Revolting: Victorian Culture and the Aesthetics of Disguit.” Samalin studies how a negative emotion like disgust helped define the modern British public sphere by reading Victorian literature alongside Enlightenment thought, social discourse, and ideas of sanitary reform. His article “Dickens, Disinnocence and the Poetics of Clouded Judgment” was just published by Dickens Studies Annual (45, 2014).

Megan Sullivan, Assistant Professor in Art History, comes to UChicago from a faculty position at Tulane. After receiving her BA in Brown in comparative literature, she attended Harvard for her PhD in the history of art and architecture. At Harvard she received the Jorge Paulo Lemann Scholarship for Brazilian studies and served as an assistant curator for the Latin American/Latin American Art Forum. In her dissertation and current book project, “Locating Abstraction: The South American Coordinates of the Avant-garde, 1945–1966,” she explores the trajectory of abstract art in Latin America. She is coeditor of A Companion to Modern and Contemporary Latin American and Latin Art, forthcoming from Wiley Blackwell in 2015.

Sofía Torralas Tovar is Associate Professor in Classics, where she spent the past two years as Visiting Professor, with a joint appointment in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Her dual affiliations reflect her range of research interests, including papyrus documents, social history, ancient religion, and historical linguistics. A native of Spain, she was previously a tenured researcher in the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean and Near East at the Spanish National Research Council in Madrid, and her work has been widely published in journals and edited volumes in both English and Spanish. Her degrees—a BA/MA in Classical Philology with a major in Greek and a PhD in Classics—are from Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Vu Tran, Assistant Professor of Practice in the Arts in English Language and Literature and the Committee on Creative Writing, began teaching as a Lecturer at UChicago in 2010. He has a PhD from the Black Mountain Institute at the University of Nevada–Las Vegas, where he was a Glenn Schaeffer Fellow in fiction. He also has an MFA from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop at the University of Iowa as well as BA and MA degrees from the University of Tulsa. He was a Finalist for the 2011 Whiting Writers’ Award. His short stories appear in numerous collections, and he is currently editing his first novel—a ten-volume titled This or Any Desert—under contract with W. W. Norton.

Vu Tran has been named Assistant Professor of Practice in the Arts in English and Creative Writing. Three other faculty members—Judy Hoffman in Cinema and Media Studies, Geof Oppenheimer in Visual Arts, and John Wilkinson in Creative Writing—serve as professors of practice in the arts, a title that acknowledges the teaching contributions of practicing artists and the growing importance of the arts on campus.

Creative Honesty

A creative writing teacher helps his students understand honesty—truth in fiction.

As UChicago’s newest Assistant Professor of Practice in Creative Writing, Vu Tran is tasked with cultivating young authors’ skills—an endeavor that’s as personal as it is pedagogical, requiring a blend of philosophy and pragmatism. “The practical aspect of it is removing bad writing from their work—and by ‘bad writing’ I mean objectively the mistakes that most writers make when they first start out,” he says. “Philosophically, I help students organize their ideas of what it means to be human—to identify it, think about it, and then dramatize it in fiction.”

That challenge is specific to each individual and often far removed from his or her other academic pursuits. “Students tell me that when they take a creative writing class, they use a different part of their brain,” says Tran, who teaches both graduate and College classes. “They need honest and honest self-reflection in essential to good writing, he believes. To improve, students must be willing to listen to honest feedback and then respond to it in their work.”

To develop an environment where students will accept unvarnished critique, Tran focuses on earning their trust. “I create a relationship where they can be open and honest and not care about what they should do to please everyone,” he says. The goal is to hone each student’s authorial voice, stripping away whatever “bad writing” surrounds and obscures it. He gets them to trust their instincts, embrace their own unique outlook, and find a point of view that will carry their ideas. “Fiction is an obstructed view of the world,” he explains. “Even with an omniscient narrator you can’t see everything. But that kind of limited blindness is crucial, because that’s what motivates the story.”

Tran guides students toward harmonious combinations of plot, character, perspective, and style—and ultimately toward having faith in their abilities. Even so, he acknowledges that “it can be difficult for writers to feel satisfied with their work. Tran is the author of award-winning fiction and a popular teacher. (See his biography above.) Yet when asked what he struggles with most, he laughs and replies, “What don’t I struggle with?” As he finishes editing his first novel, a Las Vegas detective story, Tran reflects on the range of inspirations that drive his writing process. While the narrative is important—“as a reader, I’ve always read for plot, and character often comes out of that”—some pieces begin as explorations of a philosophical concept or a compelling setting. The trick is wrangling those disparate elements and bringing them together to produce something that feels honest and true and moving and compelling and convincing—all at the same time.” That’s the standard Tran holds for his own writing, and he wants his students to achieve it too.

—Courtney C. W. Guerra, A80S
A STAGE FOR THE AGES
Court Theatre, now in its 60th season, went from a “new type of summer theatre” to a Chicago institution.

Today, Court’s Center for Classic Theatre taps the expertise of faculty to translate and adapt plays and advise the actors and production team. In 2011 Travis Jackson, associate professor in Music, advised Court’s artistic director Charles Newell on the score for his Jeff Award–winning production of Pongy and Bess. Last year a conversation between Newell and Judith Zeitlin, professor in East Asian Languages and Civilizations, resulted in a daring revival of David Henry Hwang’s M. Butterfly.

Court’s emphasis on classic theater and willingness to stage difficult modern works were welcome additions to Chicago’s still-emergent theater scene in the 1960s and 1970s, says Rudall. Back then, “you couldn’t look in the newspaper and decide to go see an Ibsen play or even Shakespeare.”

Court and its directors embraced the challenge of producing the works of Brecht and Shaw and Euripides. Rudall’s background in classics proved to be an asset. “Even when I was teaching Greek tragedies in Greek, I was always thinking of them as theater, not just as literature,” he explains. “Both sides have touched each other.”

Although Court performed serious plays, the company still liked to enjoy themselves at the theater. A 1969 memo reminded performers that “DRINKING INCONTROLLABLE LIQUORS in and around Mandel Hall is against a University law. Abuses of it have cost us a dress rehearsal once, in the old days, so never again.”

Productions earned strong reviews that attracted talented actors and technical staff from across the country. A young Kevin Kline made his Chicago debut in Tis Pity She’s a Whore (directed by Rudall) in 1968.

In the mid-1970s, University of Chicago president Edward Levi, Law ’28, PhB ’31, JD ’35, asked Rudall to lead Court’s transformation into a year-round professional company. It was, Rudall believes, part of Levi’s effort to make Hyde Park more attractive to faculty and students.

Rudall and his colleagues raised funds for a 250-seat theater to be Court’s permanent home. Completed in 1983, the Abelson Auditorium now brings in 35,000 patrons annually to see Court productions. Under Newell’s leadership, partnerships with faculty remain a tradition: Court will use Rudall’s translation of Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis for the 2014, 60th season.

It’s a fitting tribute to the company’s origins as it steps toward the future.

—Susie Allen, A’09

THE NEWEST of the University of Chicago’s global teaching and research communities, the Center in Delhi celebrates its opening in March 2014. Like its counterparts in Paris and Beijing, “the center is intended to serve the intellectual interests of all parts of the University,” says faculty director Gary Tubb, a Sanskrit scholar and professor in South Asian Languages and Civilizations. The 22 faculty projects that the center will fund in its first year reflect that broad mandate. The center will host, for example, a conference on social enterprise and sanitation, a project to annotate essential films from India’s Art Cinemas movement, and a workshop to explore future partnerships in particle physics research. An UChicago poetry professor will give a reading with a Delhi novelist. Cancer researchers from India and UChicago will explore possibilities for collaboration.

Most of the projects bring together interdisciplinary teams; many involve partnerships with Indian institutions. They all fall within the center’s three areas of scholarship: business, economics, law, and policy; culture, society, religion, and arts; and science, energy, medicine, and public health.

The Center in Delhi plans to make an annual call for proposals from UChicago faculty, encouraging not only India specialists but also scholars who have never worked there to submit their ideas. “We hope to be of use to faculty, students, and projects throughout the region of South Asia,” says Tubb, who will serve a three-year term as faculty director.

The University’s Center in Delhi creates new opportunities for global exchange.

Six projects spearheaded by Division of the Humanities faculty members will receive center funding in 2014–15. They include workshops on audio cultures of India and on anthropological looting and antiquities trafficking, a project to study traditional Tibetan books from the National Library of Bhotan; and a research trip to give MFA students exposure to contemporary arts in Delhi, Mumbai, and Kerala.

Such efforts are timely, says Tubb, because the humanities are at risk in India: “There’s an understandable tendency to focus on what are seen as more urgent, practical needs in the sciences, economics, and so forth.”

In India and many other countries, the humanities are sometimes seen as a luxury or less produc- tive than other endeavors. “But it’s already become clear that there is a great interest in India in the humanities, despite these problems,” says Tubb. Over time, he hopes the center will function as “a very visible locale for the exchange of ideas and the de- velopment of new knowledge,” in the humanities and many fields. —Elizabeth Stetson

VISIT THE CENTER IN DELHI VIRTUALLY at uchicago.in.

FROM POETRY TO PARTICLE PHYSICS
The University’s Center in Delhi creates new opportunities for global exchange.

Located in Connaught Place—a busy financial district—the center offers meeting and office space for faculty, staff, undergraduates, and graduate students as well as spaces for conferences, exhibits, and public events. The goal is to give UChicago scholars venues to work with Indian researchers and students from a wide array of institutions and with colleagues from around the world. The center will also schedule regular pro- gramming to engage UChicago alumni and friends in the region.

The newest of the University of Chicago’s global teaching and research communities, the Center in Delhi celebrates its opening in March 2014. Like its counterparts in Paris and Beijing, “the center is intended to serve the intellectual interests of all parts of the University,” says faculty director Gary Tubb, a Sanskrit scholar and professor in South Asian Languages and Civilizations. The 22 faculty projects that the center will fund in its first year reflect that broad mandate. The center will host, for example, a conference on social enterprise and sanitation, a project to annotate essential films from India’s Art Cinemas movement, and a workshop to explore future partnerships in particle physics research. An UChicago poetry professor will give a reading with a Delhi novelist. Cancer researchers from India and UChicago will explore possibilities for collaboration.

Most of the projects bring together interdisciplinary teams; many involve partnerships with Indian institutions. They all fall within the center’s three areas of scholarship: business, economics, law, and policy; culture, society, religion, and arts; and science, energy, medicine, and public health.

The Center in Delhi plans to make an annual call for proposals from UChicago faculty, encouraging not only India specialists but also scholars who have never worked there to submit their ideas. “We hope to be of use to faculty, students, and projects throughout the region of South Asia,” says Tubb, who will serve a three-year term as faculty director.

The University’s Center in Delhi creates new opportunities for global exchange.

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Six projects spearheaded by Division of the Humanities faculty members will receive center funding in 2014–15. They include workshops on audio cultures of India and on anthropological looting and antiquities trafficking, a project to study traditional Tibetan books from the National Library of Bhotan; and a research trip to give MFA students exposure to contemporary arts in Delhi, Mumbai, and Kerala.

Such efforts are timely, says Tubb, because the humanities are at risk in India: “There’s an understandable tendency to focus on what are seen as more urgent, practical needs in the sciences, economics, and so forth.”

In India and many other countries, the humanities are sometimes seen as a luxury or less productive than other endeavors. “But it’s already become clear that there is a great interest in India in the humanities, despite these problems,” says Tubb. Over time, he hopes the center will function as “a very visible locale for the exchange of ideas and the development of new knowledge,” in the humanities and many fields. —Elizabeth Stetson

VISIT THE CENTER IN DELHI VIRTUALLY at uchicago.in.