A film by visual arts assistant professor Catherine Sullivan, Ice Floes of Franz Joseph Land, helped inaugurate a gallery in the new Logan Center for the Arts (page 11).

The Triumph of Tea
Philip Lutgendorf traces the rise of chai, India’s “proletarian beverage par excellence.”

In the Engine Room of Reality
Philosophy’s junior faculty members discuss their work, inspiration, and approach to teaching at UChicago.

On the cover
The legacy of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) has inspired a visiting professorship in Indian studies. Read more on page 13.

Research in the humanities gives us the tools we need to articulate deep truths about our current, past, and future social selves. What does it mean to be a human being? What has it meant historically? What will it come to mean? The students and faculty in all our departments dedicate themselves to the thoughtful consideration of humanity’s place in the world, and I hope you enjoy sampling some of these investigations here in Tableau.

The impulse of innovation and discovery that sustains the scholarship of our distinguished faculty members is exemplified by English professor Kenneth Warren, who recently received a Humanities Visiting Committee grant to support his ongoing literary examination of our country’s racial history (see pages 2–3). An alumnus in South Asian Languages and Civilizations, Philip Lutgendorf, has taken on a very different topic, documenting India’s social history through the lens of tea (see pages 6–7). The division’s assistant professors in philosophy ponder ancient and modern thinkers and develop new ways of understanding the human mind; we introduce them on pages 8–9 and with interviews at tableau.uchicago.edu.

Graduate students come to the University of Chicago to develop their analytical skills, bringing diverse backgrounds to our community. In this issue, we share the stories from veterans of the US military who were motivated to study in the humanities after their service to our country (see pages 4–5). After graduating, many of our students pursue careers beyond the academy. To illustrate the range of careers, a new series, “Humanities at Work,” highlights their experiences (see page 10). Finally, three PhD students talk about their discoveries as scholars here and in our online edition.

With this issue of Tableau, we return to printing the magazine twice a year, now with a fresh, colorful design. We are pleased to bring you news about the opening of the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, the Sawyer Seminar devoted to investigating “Around 1948,” and a new visiting professorship in Indian studies (see pages 11–13). You can find expanded content for many articles on our website.

I am grateful for your partnership in promoting and celebrating the humanities. If you have feedback or news to share, I would love to hear from you. As always, thank you for your interest and support.

Sincerely yours,

Martha T. Roth
Dean of the Division of the Humanities

SAVE THE DATE
Humanities Day
Saturday, October 20, 2012
Richard Stier, the Frank L. Subberger Distinguished Service Professor in English Language and Literature, will give the keynote address: “Shakespeare’s Prejudices: Shrews and Jews.”

Watch past Humanities Day lectures at humanitiesday2011.uchicago.edu/video.
In his latest book, *What Was African American Literature?* (2011), Kenneth Warren argues that African American literature belonged to a specific historical period that began in the 1890s and ended in the 1960s. “Like it or not, African American literature was the literary executor of Ellison’s estate. All the language in the play had to be Ellison’s. The playwright could not take a speech by one character and put it in the mouth of another, so there was no possibility of using composite characters. Obviously, scenes would have to be cut, but the order could not be rearranged. And if that weren’t enough, there were specific scenes that had to be included.”

Do you remember the first time you read *Invisible Man*?

Oh yes. I went to high school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and black writers weren’t really teaching. So I began to read some of this literature on my own. It’s a powerful story—the story of a young man with a great deal of ambition, but not a lot of wisdom, trying to find his way into adulthood. That really spoke to me.

At the time I knew I probably wanted to study literature in college, but I don’t think I realized I would end up spending so much time on *Invisible Man*.

What was your contribution to the Court Theatre production?

My first concrete involvement was attending a staged reading about a year ago. I was a bit skeptical about any kind of stage adaptation until then. But the reading drove home how powerful the characters’ speeches are, even with the actors just sitting there. Ellison had a great ear for spoken language.

I read two versions of the stage-play adaptation and had discussions with the director [Chrisopher McElroen] and the writer [Oren Jacoby]. The main task was how to cut the novel down to a manageable size, and how to work the scenic transitions to move the narrative forward.

It received very good reviews. Deservedly so—especially since the playwright and director were working under strict constraints imposed by the literary executor of Ellison’s estate. All the language in the play had to be Ellison’s. The playwright could not take a speech by one character and put it in the mouth of another, so there was no possibility of using composite characters. Obviously, scenes would have to be cut, but the order could not be rearranged. And if that weren’t enough, there were specific scenes that had to be included.

Why do you think Ellison never completed his second novel?

In *So Black and Blue*, I speculate that Invisible Man is so powerful because Ellison was so attuned to the social, political, and aesthetic situation of the Jim Crow era. He published it at the cusp of the post-Jim Crow era, two years before the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Ellison was strongly committed to the idea that the novel, as a form, needed to process the situation of the Jim Crow era. He published it at the cusp of the post-Jim Crow era, two years before the Brown v. Board of Education decision.

Is that how you came up with the idea that African American literature ended with the Jim Crow era?

It was related, yes. I started thinking about the appropriations of Ellison’s work by a variety of scholars and activists. I wondered, what is it about Ellison that makes him seem so available? If we feel that Invisible Man speaks to us in the current moment, well, that might be an inaccurate assessment. However much racism continues, it is not the same problem as it was under Jim Crow.

Could you explain why the end of Jim Crow also ended African American literature, according to your definition?

Imaginative African American literature first begins to emerge in a moment of great disenfranchisement in the South. Beginning in the early 1890s, state constitutions were rewritten to effectively move the black population out of political life. African American writers, quite self-consciously, wanted to act as a voice for a politically silenced population.

Under those conditions, many of the writers—and I do try to provide significant examples of this in *What Was African American Literature?*—are themselves wandering, if they were successful at overturning the political conditions that made this literature so important, what would be the status of this literature?

Under Jim Crow, one could see why someone writing a poem and getting it published in a major journal could count as an argument against the Jim Crow system. And in counting against Jim Crow, the publication of that poem had implications for people who didn’t write, who didn’t read. We are no longer at that moment, when the success of a particular black individual could call attention to the falsity of racist beliefs and affect all blacks, regardless of their class status.

Were there any authors who made the transition that Ellison didn’t—that is, who wrote some books that you would consider to be African American literature and also wrote some you would not?

Toni Morrison’s first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), was written at this transitional moment that I’m talking about. Perhaps that one work falls within the historical protocol of African American literature. But the work that she does afterward is not part of this literary project.

Why are some people so offended by your argument?

They say they don’t see it that way, that it’s not the primary vector of inequality.

You were recently awarded a Humanities Visiting Committee research grant. What did you use it for?

I’ve submitted a collection of critical essays for publication on Sutton E. Griggs, an African American writer from the turn of the century. It’s part of a larger project to bring the five relatively obscure novels that he published from 1899 through 1906 into a set of critical editions and draw some attention to them.

I also helped put together an interdisciplinary conference, called Jim Crow America: A Problem in Historicism, in April 2012. Our goal was to explore the benefits and limitations of viewing this period as differing significantly from the forms of subordination that came before and after.
GOING INTO THE FIELD

Three veterans trade military service for graduate studies in the humanities.

**BY THE TIME HE WAS 32**, Eric McMillan had served in Bosnia, deployed twice to Iraq, and commanded a company of 167 soldiers during a year of intense combat in the Iraqi province of Diyala.

“I would walk in the door at 0600 hours and the whole building would snap to attention,” he says. “I was used to being a military officer.”

Three months after his honorable discharge, McMillan, AM’10, traded the life of an Army captain for the life of a student in the division’s Master of Arts Program in the Humanities (MAPH) program—a transition that wasn’t without the occasional moment of culture shock.

“I lived, breathed, slept a war, twice. Lost men. Was involved in a lot of really heavy fighting. Made the kinds of morally ambiguous and complex decisions that people will probably not face in their entire lifetime,” he says. Spending a year with students who hadn’t done the same “just felt so weird,” he admits.

Active duty military personnel make up a small percentage of the US population—less than one percent. When soldiers return to civilian life, and particularly to academic life, they are likely to find themselves surrounded by people who haven’t shared their experiences.

“Most people have no idea, and they know they have no idea, what you did,” says MAPH alum Robert Greene, AM’11.

Yet for Greene, McMillan, and fellow veteran Josh Cannon, who “cherished” his role as a listener. Because he spoke Arabic—a rarity among American military personnel—he was able to build relationships with many of the Iraqis he met, who welcomed the opportunity to discuss their frustrations about the war.

He quickly became the beneficiary of Iraqi hospitality. When Cannon mentioned he was hoping to find a copy of Homer’s Iliad in Arabic, he didn’t have to look for long. “I got, like, four copies,” he says with a laugh.

Though he saw relatively little combat, Cannon’s time in Iraq was far from relaxed. During a mortar attack on his compound, “I remember getting mad,” he recalls. “Instead of being scared that stuff’s falling from the sky and exploding, I thought, ‘Why are they trying to kill me?’ If I would have met this person, I would have chatted to him in Arabic, and I would have tried to be his friend.”

Both McMillan and Greene saw intense combat during the surge in 2007—McMillan as a commander and Greene as an infantryman.

In the rare downtime between patrols and raids, Greene read novels by Dostoyevsky, as well as works by writers from the Middle East. The Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz quickly became a favorite. “When you read the literature of a culture you’re unfamiliar with, they immediately cease to be as alien to you,” he says.

McMillan struggled with the impossible moral quandaries he faced as a commander. “You have two primary responsibilities—one is to the men, and the other is to the mission. That’s the fine dance of it. Sometimes no matter what you do, somebody is going to get killed.”

“You men will train really hard. You’re going to plan as carefully as you possibly can. You’re going to make sure that they execute as methodically as they can. But still, you don’t control everything out there,” he says. “Internally, the thing that you have to learn is how to accept that in order to do your job.”

**DURING HIS TIME IN MAPH**, Greene found comfort in “the quiet life of reading and talking about books.” It was a quiet, enjoyable, invigorating year.

For his thesis, he began to work on a novel based on his military experiences ("horrible albatross, pain in my you-know-what," he says of the writing process) He has also completed a creative nonfiction account of his time overseas, Nightfall at Dawn: American Soldiers’ Counterinsurgency in Iraq, written in collaboration with several of his fellow soldiers. The book, published in April 2012, explores the war in Iraq from the point of view of enlisted personnel trying to learn counterinsurgency strategy in the middle of the conflict.

“Writing about the war has been a double-edged sword” for Greene. It can be difficult to relive the experience, but “sometimes it’s good to go back to think about things.”

Cannon, now in the final stages of writing a master’s thesis about a Bronze Age site in Turkey, has discovered that his military experience serves him well in his graduate work. The physical discomfort associated with archaeological excavations—no sleep, bad weather, bland food—never ruffled him. In fact, he was surprised to discover he found reassurance in the similarities between fieldwork and military life. “When we went to Iraq, we called it ‘going into the field.’”

“Nobody’s shooting at you today. It’s a good day.”

When you read the literature of a culture you’re unfamiliar with, they immediately cease to be as alien to you,” says Greene.

For more photos and reflections from veterans, visit tableau.uchicago.edu.

When I looked around at my fellow students, who were stressing over papers and exams. “When I looked around at my fellow students, who were stressing over papers and exams. “Well, I’m gonna get done. I know it’s gonna get done,” he says. “Nobody’s shooting at you today. It’s a good day.”

An alumnus traces the rise of chai, India’s “proletarian beverage par excellence.”

BY ELIZABETH STATION

FRESH OUT OF COLLEGE and on his first trip to India, Philip Lutgendorf quickly became addicted to chai—“a rich dairy concoction that is heavy on the dairy, usually heavy on the sugar, and also heavy on the tea.” That was in 1971. Returning as a graduate student to study Indian epic narrative and performance, he says, “I fell into the habit of taking chai, and I always thought that it was an inextricable and immemorial part of Indian life.”

Fuelled by the chai he drank at street-side stalls and at home in his Iowa kitchen, Lutgendorf (AB’71, AM’82, PhD’87) became a student to study Indian epic narrative and performance, he says, “After I fell into the habit of taking chai, and I always thought that it was an inextricable and immemorial part of Indian life.”

By the time Lutgendorf landed a Fulbright-Hays faculty research award in 2010–11 to gather material for a book on the social history of tea, he says, “I would just walk up as if from Mars and say, ‘Excuse me, I’m a foreign researcher,’” he says, laughing. “And most of the time people were very, very friendly and quite willing to talk.”

To chronicle the triumph of tea, Lutgendorf scoured Indian archives for materials in Hindi and other languages; he also did ethnographic research. “A lot of important developments in the popularization of tea are simply not documented in print sources,” he says. “You have to go to oral history. In Calcutta, he visited well-loved tea shops and interviewed the proprietors. And in Mumbai, he trekked to parks where elderly people stroll and congregate in the early morning, to collect their stories about how tea was introduced in their family, village, or area.

“Taste like pumpkin pie.”

When Lutgendorf explains that chai is, “in the long durée of Indian history, a very recent development,” he says that most Indians respond with the same surprise he felt when he first began his study. “They get this puzzled look and say, ‘What did we drink before?’” With time, he found the answer. “Chai really didn’t replace anything. It created a new niche for itself as a very inexpensive social beverage that could be freely shared.”

Fueled by the chai he drank at street-side stalls and at home in his Iowa kitchen, Lutgendorf (AB’71, AM’82, PhD’87) became a professor of Hindi and modern Indian studies at the University of Iowa.


For years, Lutgendorf assumed that tea drinking was “as Indian, and as old as, the Vedas,” or ancient Hindu scriptures.

“I fell into the habit of taking chai, and I always thought that it was an inextricable and immemorial part of Indian life.”

As the British de-colonized and independence movements gathered steam, they sought to convince consumers that tea drinking was “as Indian, and as old as, the Vedas,” or ancient Hindu scriptures. “It was a rare substance,” he says, “almost certainly imported from China, perhaps via Iran.”

As the British de-colonized and independence movements gathered steam, they sought to convince consumers that tea drinking was “as Indian, and as old as, the Vedas,” or ancient Hindu scriptures. “It was a rare substance,” he says, “almost certainly imported from China, perhaps via Iran.”

In 1936, the Indian Tea Market Expansion Board launched an aggressive marketing campaign to get ordinary Indians hooked on the drink. Free samples of brewed tea were profilled in railway stations and public markets; promotional posters and literature demonstrated the “correct” (that is, English) way to brew and serve tea. The campaign’s rhetoric was not subtle; in his archival research, Lutgendorf found promotional materials that “assume the triumphalist tone of Christian missionary tracts, suggesting that the quintessentially English beverage will rescue its Indian consumers from ‘squalid’ and vice, and will inculcate in them such desirable traits as punctuality, decorum, and good sanitation.”

South Asia’s first mass marketing effort lasted two decades, but it had limited success, in part due to political opposition. Mohandas Gandhi and other nationalists criticized tea as a “foreign product” and sought to convince consumers that tea drinking was “as Indian, and as old as, the Vedas,” or ancient Hindu scriptures.

Meanwhile, tea provides a refreshing change of pace and “an intriguing ‘tense’ through which to focus on other changes associated with ‘modernity’ in twentieth-century India.” The spread of tea accompanied changes in lifestyle, rural-to-urban migration, and urbanization, he notes; it paralleled the rise of middle-class culture, marketing, and consumerism.

To view a chai recipe from Philip Lutgendorf and a slide show of early tea advertising, visit tableauchicago.edu.

Images courtesy of Philip Lutgendorf; the Priya Paul Collection, New Delhi, and the Medieval and Early Modern Visuals, Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.
Being part of a large junior-faculty cohort is "fantastic," says Antwone Ford, whose research seeks to define the fundamental expression of human agency. He goes on to explain that "it's just nice to have colleagues of your generation." Marko Malink, who studies the logic of Aristotle, agrees: "you often have the same questions and the same issues," although that could arguably be said for scholars at every stage of their careers. A member of the faculty since 1994, Vogler feels a duty as chair to carry on the tradition of mentorship that helped shape her own career. Vogler, who studies the logic of Aristotle, to define the fundamental expression of human agency. He goes on to explain that "it's just nice to have colleagues of your generation." Marko Malink, who studies the logic of Aristotle, agrees: "you often have the same questions and the same issues," although that could arguably be said for scholars at every stage of their careers. 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Choose your friends wisely.

The early years at NPR were difficult. "It feels a bit like hazing," she says. "The process weeds out the people who don't want to do it—who don't need to do it. To survive, Ulaby suggests, find mentors within the organization. At the same time, build a network of friends outside the job, so you don't get too wrapped up in workplace drama.

Follow through on ideas.

Too often, Ulaby says, young people who want to break into radio will suggest promising stories, then won't follow through. "If you can't finish the great story ideas that you've thought of—just like I couldn't finish the great dissertation that I thought of—it might be time to start experimenting with a different line of work," she says. "Perhaps acclimate." 

EUGENIA WILLIAMSON, AM’06
Staff writer, Boston Phoenix, and associate editor, The Baffler

Williamson received a Master of Arts Program in the Humanities (MAPH) partly because she was considering a career in textbook publishing and McGraw-Hill, which had an office in Chicago at the time, required a master's degree. After writing a thesis on Jonathan Franzen’s The Corrections, Williamson graduated and landed a job at the company. "Then they had some kind of weird hiring freeze and the office closed," she says.

Give it away—at first.

After graduating from MAPH, Williamson paid the bills by temping so she could take two unpaid internships: as research assistant for Rob Elder, a former Chicago Tribune journalist who was writing a book, Last Words of the Executed (2010), and as writer in residence at Midway Studios, where she wrote book reviews and did author interviews. "For free," she says.

Write on spec.

Williamson’s big break was an uncritiqued review of Patti Smith’s memoir Just Kids, which was published in the Boston Globe in 2010. This led to a regular gig as a books columnist for the Globe. Meanwhile, Williamson was contributing music reviews to the Boston Phoenix, where she eventually landed a full-time staff job.

For women: take a stand.

"I think there’s a lot of space for women writers who have strong opinions and critical acumen," Williamson says. In the world of small magazines especially, "it feels a bit like a boys’ club. I want to see more women in there. Come on, girls!"

HANK SARTIN, AM’88, PHD’98
Senior editor, Time Out Chicago

In 1993, while Hank Sartin was a PhD student in English, a mutual friend mentioned to the Windy City Times editor that Sartin was researching Bugs Bunny (among other film topics). This led to his first published article, "Bugs Bunny: Queer as a $3 Bill." In 1999, Sartin left Wayne State University, where he was teaching film studies, to pursue a career in journalism.

Write to the assignment.

"Write clean copy and stick to the assigned word count. "Speaking as an editor," he says, "it’s astonishing how often someone gives you double the length you asked for." He showed his first article to four people he trusted before turning it in. As a result, he says, the article was published with very few changes, "which is unusual for writers."

Send a thank-you note.

"After the Bugs Bunny piece was published, Sartin sent a follow-up note to the editor, thanking him for the opportunity and asking to be kept in mind for future articles. This led to an assignment for another feature—so Sartin sent another thank-you note—and eventually a paid weekly gig as a film reviewer that lasted five years.

Cobble it together.

When he left Wayne State, Sartin "tried himself on the mercy of Chicago," he says. He wrote articles for the Chicago Free Press and the Reader, led film discussion groups, and took a three-year appointment as writing advisor for MAPH. A regular television column for Time Out eventually led to a staff position at film writer: "finally get a full-time job in journalism at 40." —Carrie Golus, AB’91, AM’93

LISTEN TO RADIO STORIES, see photos, and read favorite articles by the three journalists at tableau.uchicago.edu.

HOW DID YOU GET THAT AWESOME JOB?
Alumni offer ten tips for breaking into journalism.

NEDA ULABY, AM’98
Arts reporter, National Public Radio

Ulaby began her journalism career the old-fashioned way: after graduating from college, she worked in the classified advertising department at the Topeka Capital-Journal. While doing graduate work in film theory (then part of the English department), Ulaby kept freelancing and eventually took a full-time job as managing editor at the Windy City Times. She fell in love with radio when she participated in an NPR training session through the National Gay and Lesbian Journalists Association.

Be prepared to start over.

Ulaby’s first job at NPR was a one-month position as a production assistant—and she had to fight to get that. "There was lots of e-mailing back and forth and cajoling and suggesting and hinting," she says. She left a job overseeing four staff reporters at the Boston Globe in 2010. This led to a regular gig as a books columnist for the Globe. Meanwhile, Williamson was contributing music reviews to the Boston Phoenix, where she eventually landed a full-time staff job.

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THE STRIKING STRUCTURE, located at 955 East 66th Street, formally celebrates its grand opening October 11-13, 2012. Meanwhile, arts programming is already under way, with select classes and more than 40 performances, exhibitions, and conferences scheduled for the center’s six-month preview period. Designed as a “mixing bowl for the arts” by architects Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, the Logan Center provides bright new spaces for artists and scholars to work, perform, and collaborate. The 184,000-square-foot building—located just west of historic Midway Studios—will serve as a bridge between the University campus, surrounding communities, and civic and cultural institutions citywide.

The departments and programs in cinema and media studies, music, theater and performance studies, and visual arts all have homes in the new facility.

“The arts at the University of Chicago have for many years now been bubbling energetically. The Logan Center will give public face to this energy, and it will enrich the world of small magazines especially, “It feels a bit like a boys’ club. I want to see more women in there. Come on, girls!” HANK SARTIN, AM’88, PHD’98 Senior editor, Time Out Chicago In 1993, while Hank Sartin was a PhD student in English, a mutual friend mentioned to the Windy City Times editor that Sartin was researching Bugs Bunny (among other film topics). This led to his first published article, “Bugs Bunny: Queer as a $3 Bill.” In 1999, Sartin left Wayne State University, where he was teaching film studies, to pursue a career in journalism. Write to the assignment. “Write clean copy and stick to the assigned word count. “Speaking as an editor,” he says, “it’s astonishing how often someone gives you double the length you asked for.” He showed his first article to four people he trusted before turning it in. As a result, he says, the article was published with very few changes, “which is unusual for writers.” Send a thank-you note. “After the Bugs Bunny piece was published, Sartin sent a follow-up note to the editor, thanking him for the opportunity and asking to be kept in mind for future articles. This led to an assignment for another feature—so Sartin sent another thank-you note—and eventually a paid weekly gig as a film reviewer that lasted five years. Cobble it together. When he left Wayne State, Sartin “tried himself on the mercy of Chicago,” he says. He wrote articles for the Chicago Free Press and the Reader, led film discussion groups, and took a three-year appointment as writing advisor for MAPH. A regular television column for Time Out eventually led to a staff position at film writer: “finally get a full-time job in journalism at 40.” —Carrie Golus, AB’91, AM’93 LISTEN TO RADIO STORIES, see photos, and read favorite articles by the three journalists at tableau.uchicago.edu. FOR INFORMATION: about events, tours, and hours, visit arts.uchicago.edu/logan. NEWS IN BRIEF A NEW ERA FOR THE ARTS The arts and humanities began a new chapter in March, when the University’s Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts opened its doors to students, faculty, and the public.

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FOR INFORMATION: about events, tours, and hours, visit arts.uchicago.edu/logan. HOW IT STACKS UP The Logan Center’s eleven-story tower houses a café, screening room, classrooms, performance labs, rehearsal space, and a rooftop deck. The building also features a digital media center, an exhibition gallery, workshops, studio space, two theaters, and a 474-seat performance hall. Completed on time and on budget, the $114 million facility was made possible by a $35 million gift from the family of Reva and David Logan.
The yearlong seminar Around 1948: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Global Transformations examines the political and cultural changes immediately following the Second World War. Coordinated by the Franke Institute for the Humanities and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s Sawyer Seminar program, the project proposes to look at the time “around 1948” from multiple disciplines.

“It was a moment that seemed to us so rapidly evolving,” says Deborah Nelson, associate professor in English language and literature and a member of the seminar steering committee. “People were in migration, and institutions that had formerly appeared incredibly durable were suddenly incredibly fragile.”

Boundaries changed as new nations emerged or partitioned. Issues such as human rights took on a global frame. While the postwar era is commonly viewed as a time of rebuilding after the destruction of the war, the seminar looks beyond the order imposed by Cold War logic. Much of today’s political world took shape around this time, and the scholars involved in the project are examining political and cultural transformations while questioning whether certain alignments might have evolved differently.

“One of the phrases from the grant proposal was ‘the paths not taken,’” says Nelson. “We wanted to revisit the issues people cared about, many of which were dropped or reconfigured during the Cold War.”

The seminar grew out of the idea, posited by Franke Institute director and English professor James Chandler, AM’72, PhD’78, that 1948 was a seminal year.

Chandler pulled together a steering committee in late 2009 that included Nelson and English department colleagues Leela Gandhi, as well as Christine Stansell and James Sparrow from history and Lisa Wedeen, a professor in political science.

“We were very much looking at ways in which to find interdisciplinary approaches to shared histories,” says Gandhi. “We need social scientists to tell us historically what happened in 1948, and we need people in the humanities to talk about what might have happened.”

The seminar launched in October 2011 with film screenings and a two-day conference that centered on the end of the war, Year Zero. The World Unmade. In winter quarter the focus moved to “traumatic cosmopolitanism,” studying the massive movements of refugees and others who were returning from war or transplanted either voluntarily or unwillingly.

Nelson and Sparrow taught a graduate course on this topic through the Center for Disciplinary Innovation, another Mellon Foundation project at the Franke Institute. “The courses became a way to really dig deeply within an area,” says Nelson. Gandhi and Wedeen are teaching a spring course focusing on postcolonialism in the Middle East and Asia. “What excites me the most is taking the opportunity to think about how much Western knowledge owes to non-Western histories,” says Gandhi. “At this particular moment [around 1948], events both in the West and elsewhere are crucial to what we are today.”

Lectures, workshops, and panel discussions throughout the spring quarter have explored the emergence of new nation-states, the politics of nonalignment, and socialist experiments. The final conference, After 1948: Realignments of Nonalignment and the Cold War, was held April 26–27 and brought participants from Chicago and beyond.

“The naming of the chair honors Vivekananda’s ties to the city of Chicago. The Hindu leader “stole the show” when he spoke at the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago, said Dipesh Chakrabarty, the Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor in history and South Asian languages and civilizations. In 2011, an art installation on the main staircase of the Art Institute of Chicago commemorated his lecture, which is cherished as “a proud moment in Indian history,” according to Ambassador Rao.

Vivekananda traveled the world making spiritual disciples and spreading a message of religious and intellectual tolerance. With the visiting professorship, the Indian government “will help us keep alive the legacy of his struggle,” said Chakrabarty, “to ‘unite the East and West,’ not ‘above the tumult of controversy,’ for knowledge is pushed along by controversies, but by staying right in the middle of that tumult and working through it, as the swami strove to do all his life.”—Elizabeth Station

Engaging with India

Thanks to a $1.5 million gift from India’s Ministry of Culture, UChicago has established a new chair in Indian studies commemorating the legacy of the Hindu spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda.

Dean Martha Roth and the Ministry of Culture’s Sanjiv Mittal (above) sign the agreement establishing the visiting professorship. Students at the January celebration (right).

**Thoughts live; they travel far.**

—Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902)
For an inside look at graduate studies in the Humanities Division, Tableau contributor Katherine Muhlenkamp chatted with Adams (right) and two other PhD students: Jose Antonio Arellano (left) in English language and literature and Caroline Schopp (center) in art history. All are recipients of named fellowships, all are fervently immersed in their research, and all are getting the most out of their time at the University. Here’s a preview of the interviews, which appear in full online at tableau.uchicago.edu.

“Rather than appeal to poetry’s special status, I suggest that poetry occupies itself with problems that all of us have by virtue of being persons with minds.” —V. Joshua Adams

“I think Melville made a calculated decision to set up a narrative arc and then, as it were, wreck it.” —Jose Antonio Arellano

“I have always loved that art history presents the possibility for shaping an academic career that involves curating.” —Caroline Schopp