The Mellon Initiative supports undergraduate research in the Arts and Humanities by:

- Encouraging experiential learning through summer research fellowships
- Funding student travel to present research at local and national conferences
- Fostering collaborative and interdisciplinary research
- Enriching Trinity’s curriculum in the Arts and Humanities
- Supporting embedding research skills and opportunities in the Arts and Humanities curriculum through faculty grants

Co-Directors: Dr. Heather Sullivan & Dr. Chad Spigel

Program Assistant: Sabrina Camacho, scamacho@trinity.edu, Coates Library 411 http://gotu.us/mellon
The Mellon Initiative at Trinity University

The Mellon Initiative funds student and faculty in the arts and humanities who are undertaking sustained research projects.

Since 2013, the Mellon has supported 79 students who collaborate with faculty on a wide variety of research projects. The grant is competitive and requires advanced planning with faculty. This kind of experiential learning has provided students the opportunity to engage directly in the highest level of research, including cultural fieldwork, the digital humanities, the environmental humanities, archival research, the creation of graphic novels, and the impact of community work. Most universities offer these opportunities only to graduate students; Trinity University, in contrast, offers these funds and research experiences to our undergraduate students in the arts and humanities. All of the students engaging in summer Mellon research project present at the annual summer symposium at Trinity and several have published their work or given presentations at regional or national conferences.

Read on to learn about the 2017 Mellon SURFs (Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships)

Seeing China through Different Eyes:
Analyzing Ten Years of Trinity Students’ Responses to Chinese Cinema

Jessica Philips
Dr. Jie Zhang, Modern Languages and Literatures

Our project examined how hundreds of Trinity students over the past ten years (2008-2017) reacted to thirteen selected Chinese-language films including works by Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-liang, Ang Lee, John Woo, Wong Kar-wai, Stanley Kwan, Stephen Chow, and Zhang Yang. Using quantitative and qualitative analysis of students’ responses, we explored what types of questions dominated or were marginalized and the implications therein. We also investigated English-language and Chinese-language scholarship on the films to further contextualize students’ responses and evaluate the ways in which student and scholarly inquiries differ or cohere. Using these case studies, our research offers a broader view of Western conceptions of Chinese cinema.
### Roman World Lab: Second Century Transformations

**Caroline Kerley, Andrew Tao, Curtis Whitacre**  
**Dr. O’Sullivan, Classics & Dr. Ruben Dupertuis, Religion**

Our Mellon Institute focused on two prose texts from the 2nd century CE: Apuleius’ *Golden Ass* and the Gospel of Peter. These two texts are rarely paired, yet they share many features, including a focus on conversion, transformation, and religious salvation. This summer, our institute began work on interpretive guides to these texts that will eventually be published on an open-access model. Specifically, we initiated work on an intermediate-level commentary on the Latin text of book 11 of the *Golden Ass*, and on a website that will ultimately serve as a repository of teaching resources on the Gospel of Peter.

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### New Manuscript Sources and the Canon of John Donne's Poetry

**Tiffany Nguyen**  
**Dr. Willis Salomon, English**

Our research is part of Dr. Salomon’s continuing work on the English poet, John Donne (1573-1631). The Variorum Edition of Donne’s poetry, still in progress but already well advanced, has gone a long way toward clarifying the editorial uncertainty that has plagued twentieth-century editions of Donne’s poetry, revealing its complex manuscript history. The Variorum uncovers a robust, at times overwhelming, variety of manuscript versions of Donne’s poems. This project will research the effect of the Variorum’s discoveries of new manuscript sources on the interpretation of individual poems in the Donne canon and on the making of Donne as a canonical poet.

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### Music in Pre-World War II San Antonio

**Ryun Howe**  
**Dr. Carl Leafstedt, Music**

One of the most musical cities in the United States for much of the 20th century, San Antonio paradoxically has little appreciation for its rich music history. Before the current San Antonio Symphony was founded in 1939, multiple earlier incarnations of the orchestra existed from 1905 through the early 1930s. Researching original reports and historical texts, we documented these earlier orchestras for the first time, connecting them—musicians, civic ambitions, and patrons—to the later founding of the current Symphony.
Anti-Chinese Sentiment in Vietnam

Nhi Nguyen

Dr. Alfred Montoya, Anthropology

Tensions between China and Vietnam concerning disputed islands and maritime boundaries in the East Sea have spilled over into mass political demonstrations, overt calls for aggressive defense of national territories, and sniping and trolling online. We interviewed Hoa (ethnic Chinese minority) and Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese majority) residents of Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam’s largest and wealthiest city, and home to Vietnam’s largest Hoa population) to explore the social production of hate. Contemporary and historical events are instrumentalized by authorities and other interested parties to shape domestic developments and the political, territorial, and economic relationship between China and Vietnam.

"Isabel Coixet's Learning to Drive" (2015): Navigating a Transatlantic Perspective on Race in New York City

Rachel Daniel

Dr. Debra Ochoa, Modern Language and Literatures

In reaction to globalization, Spanish writers and directors created complex depictions of global cities, such as New York, a setting that lends itself to the exploration of immigration, cultural encounters, and identity. By focusing on the Catalanian director Isabel Coixet’s film, Learning to Drive (2015), we examined the dynamic between Wendy, an Upper-West Side resident, and Darwan, a Sikh exile, who gives her driving lessons. As they both look out of a car’s windshield, the glass becomes a screen where Wendy can begin to see beyond her privileged view of the city.

The Jewish-American Experience through Graphic Novels & Comix

Yesenia Caballero

Dr. Victoria Aarons, English

Our research on Jewish-American graphic narratives will contribute to "The New Jewish-American Literary Studies," a book-length project for which Dr. Aarons has received a contract with Cambridge University Peers. In particular, our research this summer focused on the parallels between Jewish and American mythology. Our research, by closely examining the literature of Batman and the climate under which he was created, sheds new light on how this iconic figure parallels the Jewish legend of the Golem, a figure sculpted out of clay and brought to life by Rabbi Loew to protect the Jewish people; Batman, just as the Golem, serves as champion of the persecuted.
Images, Administrators, and Archives: Seals Preserved in the Persepolis Fortification Archive

Benjamin Brody

Our project is part of a larger research initiative (based at the University of Chicago) involving what is today called the Persepolis Fortification archive, a massive hoard of clay administrative documents excavated at Persepolis in southwestern Iran. The archive dates to the years 509-493 BC in the reign of Darius the Great. The Elamite and Aramaic texts from the Fortification archive concern the state’s storage, transfer, and disbursal of food rations to workers (mainly agricultural), administrators, some elite members of Achaemenid society (including the royal family), animals, and deities in the various administrative regions of the system. Individuals involved in the disbursement, oversight, and receiving of these transactions signified their presence/authorization via the application of their seals to the tablets. These seals, cylindrical- and stamp-shaped pieces of stone, were carved (in the negative) with remarkably complex figural imagery. The application of the seal to the still-moist clay document left impressions (in the positive) of that imagery (in essence, these impressions served the same functions as signatures do today). The summer research project concerns linking seals (left as impressions on the clay documents) with officials/offices named in the texts. To date some 3400 distinct seals have been identified in the archive. Our goal is to establish an “administrative commentary” for each seal in the archive, i.e., a comprehensive summary for each seal that articulates: 1) how a seal is applied to tablets (i.e., on what surfaces); 2) in what types of transactions it is involved; 3) with what type of commodities it is involved; 4) with which named officials/offices it is linked.

The Border Cultural Production Research Project

Chelsea Rodriguez

The Border Cultural Production project surveyed two main areas of cultural production: literary arts and traditional arts/festival celebrations along the Texas-Mexico borderlands. The research was conducted in three locations: El Paso, McAllen and Laredo. The overarching hypothesis for the work is that the borderlands region, as a cultural area, constitutes fertile ground for specific and unique opportunities to study the intersection of various conditions such as class, race, ethnicity, and gender. The project focused on traditional arts/celebrations and Chicanx writers. We interviewed writers and other cultural workers such as piñata makers and matachin dancers to theorize issues of intersectionality within the borderlands context.
### “The Invisible City”: Travel, Attention and site-specific Performance

**Alexis Jarrett & Beverly Morabito**

The Invisible City explores the city as both stage and content through 1) 21 vignettes that explore individual cities; 2) an intimate portrait of Teatro Potlach’s 26-year-old ongoing project “Invisible Cities,” which has temporarily transformed dozens of cities across Europe and the Americas; and 3) exercises to guide artists to explore and excavate their own urban spaces. Beverly Morabito and Alexis Jarrett researched Potlach’s archives and latest performance of Invisible Cities in Fara in Sabina, Italy. Beverly Morabito is illustrating Dr. Gillette’s manuscript and creating her own children’s book. Jarrett is transcribing interviews with Potlach members and creating a documentary about the technical work behind site-specific theatre.

### Politics, Religion, and the British Volunteer Movement of the 1790s

**Caroline Grand**

In the 1790s, as revolutionary France began to expand its military reach beyond its own borders, the British government encouraged the formation of “volunteer corps” and “armed associations” — voluntary groups of civilians who pledged to defend the British homeland against foreign invasion and domestic disturbance. Although the French invasion never materialized, the volunteer corps became a highly visible part of British society. In towns and cities throughout Britain, volunteer units would sometimes march to church in uniform and hear a sermon commissioned for the occasion, after which the unit’s banners were often consecrated by the Anglican priest. This research project involves an attempt to catalogue and interpret these sermons, with the goal of understanding how the volunteer movement articulated British national identity at the end of the eighteenth century.

### To Think–To Think–To Learn–To Teach! Translating Erin Piscator’s Post-War Diaries

**Michael Cole Callen**

Never translated or published in English, the post-war diary of Erwin Piscator, Germany’s foremost stage director, covers the eleven years from 1951-1963 and over a thousand pages, charting Piscator’s return from exile, the re-building of his career, and the development of his innovative stagecraft. As part of this translation project, we reviewed existing material about Piscator to examine how his diary reflects and comments on contemporary historical events in Western Europe, and how it compares to other accounts of Piscator’s theories and process. We concluded with 10 of 25 chapters translated, and a wealth of new information about a pioneer of documentary theatre.
Apply for 2018 Mellon Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships

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melloninitiative@trinity.edu

https://sites.trinity.edu/melloninitiative
Combining research, civic engagement, and creative expression, Derek Hudson worked with Associate Professor of English, and 2016-18 City of San Antonio Poet Laureate, Jenny Browne to develop *San Antonio Lost and Found: A Poetry Exchange*. This accessible poetry curriculum is grounded in the literal and figurative legacy of St. Anthony and will be used in schools, libraries and community centers around the city. Derek also developed an online teacher resource guide and composed original poetry as a means of documenting his experiences with community collaboration and public humanities.
Old, Other, and On View: Exhibitions of Ancient and “Primitive” Art in the Twentieth Century

Natalie Carrier

Dr. Kathryn O'Rourke, Art History

This project investigates discussions of ancient and “primitive” art in the early twentieth century as established in western Europe and the United States in order to understand how scholars and artists used the term “archaism,” and how they regarded the art of cultures that were historically and/or geographically remote. Through historiographic analysis of exhibition catalogs, scholarly journals, and popular press reviews concerning ancient and ancient-inspired art, this study develops a working definition of “archaism” to explore the ways intellectuals and artists constructed the meaning of a revised modern classicism in dialogue with one another and with their own past.

An Unattributed Renaissance Manuscript in the Trinity University Special Collections

Kristina Kummerer

Dr. Kimberlyn Montford, Music

A gradual is a liturgical book of the Roman Catholic Church that contains the chants sung in the Mass Proper, which change from one service to the next. Gradual manuscripts are typically large enough that the music can be read by all the members of a choir during the service. These collections are records of historical liturgical practice, and also serve as reflections of local usage, allowing a glimpse into traditions that have long been lost. The Trinity University Special Collections possesses an anonymous early Renaissance gradual manuscript, gifted to the university by the estate of Elizabeth Huth Coates. There is no other information regarding the bequest. The manuscript lacks archival tags and bibliographic records, and scholars outside the Trinity Community are unaware of the item. As a result, the manuscript sits untouched. This project examines and catalogues the content of this resource, seeking to both assess a preliminary compilation date for the manuscript and situate it through analysis of its contents, marginalia, physical condition and treatment, and liturgical associations. An initial transcription of the chants unique to this collection will also encourage further religious history and music research. This project enables information on this unattributed treasure to circulate in the academic world, making further research possible. At the project’s completion, the Trinity manuscript can be studied alongside and with reference to contemporary manuscripts worldwide.
Neither Quite Southern nor Western: African Americans during the Civil Rights Era in San Antonio 1937-1978

Nina Nevill

Dr. Carey Latimore, History

This project "Neither Quite Southern nor Western: African Americans during the Civil Rights Era in San Antonio, 1937-1978," examines the ways black San Antonians pursued a political and social agenda during this period. By relying on a variety of private, public, court, church, and government documents, we explore the ways that the Civil Rights Era in San Antonio neither completely reflected the struggles in traditionally southern cities nor did it completely mirror the Civil Rights struggles in western cities. Instead, San Antonio’s race relations over this period reflected a hybrid due to a number of factors. When compared to other southern cities, San Antonio’s relatively small number of African Americans both before and after the Civil War, and the presence of a significant Latino population compared to other southern cities, made race relations in San Antonio different. Nonetheless, the fact that San Antonio was a city with slavery and that the surrounding countryside was home to a significant number of African Americans both before the Civil War and beyond helped create a climate where, although race relations were not as strained and abrasive as they were in Houston or Dallas, racial sensibilities ran significantly higher than they did in western cities which had even less of a racial history than San Antonio.

Surveying Classical Traditions in Science Fiction and Modern Fantasy

Ariana Fletcher-Bai

Isaiah Mitchell (Murchison Fellow)

Dr. Benjamin Stevens

This project aimed at beginning a survey and catalogue of primary materials and published research in the study of classical traditions in science fiction and modern fantasy (CTSFMF). CTSFMF is a burgeoning field in classical reception studies, as heralded by recent 'state of the art' essays and dedicated volumes and by representation at international conferences. Despite increased theoretical sophistication, CTSFMF remains new enough that the primary modern materials for study have not been surveyed and catalogued. This project started to make up for that lack by compiling hundreds of examples of CTSFMF into a database that is available for consultation and open to new contributions. The student researchers discussed their work—in general, and with specific focuses on Ursula K. LeGuin and Orpheus—at a major international Classics conference in Montreal.
### Maverick Rights: Mayor Maury Maverick and Free Speech in Wartime San Antonio

Hunter Sosby  
Dr. Jennifer Henderson, Communication

Maury Maverick was one of the strongest defenders of civil liberties of his time. Mayor of San Antonio from 1939 - 1941 and formerly a United States congressman, Maverick’s political philosophy was defined by his beliefs in extending civil liberties—especially the rights to free speech and assembly—to all citizens, regardless of political beliefs. In August 1939, Maverick approved a permit to allow the local Communist Party use of the Municipal Auditorium. The auditorium had been dedicated as a memorial to those who had died in World War I, and his opponents fought the meeting permit bitterly. The clash culminated in 5,000 people, including leaders of the Catholic Church, American Legion, Elks Club, and KKK gathering to protest the meeting. Ultimately, the protesters caused thousands of dollars in damage to the auditorium. The fallout from the meeting began two movements to recall Maverick from the mayor’s office and eventually led to his indictment on felony charges of paying the poll taxes of garment union workers. Despite the intense backlash Maverick received from his decision, his stance remains one of the strongest displays of support for civil liberties in San Antonio history.

### The Butterfly Project: Using Virtual Worlds to Document Conditions In Immigration Detention Centers

Andrea Acevedo  
Dr. Aaron Delwiche, Communications

The Butterfly Project seeks to promote audience empathy by immersing users in a simulation of the immigration system. As the user navigates three rooms based on real-world immigration centers, she can walk into the rooms themselves and stand among people being processed in the centers. The project also invites users to examine related objects such as ankle monitors used to track detainees. These spaces and objects were recreated based on existing photographs, videos, and written records of immigration centers. We identified measurable properties of other elements in the photos (e.g. water coolers, plastic bottles, and human bodies). Since the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) will not allow outsiders to visit these centers, most people will never have the opportunity to experience these conditions first-hand. The Butterfly Project attempts to remedy this situation.
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies. To this end, it supports exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work. Leading colleges and universities are custodians of knowledge; they produce, preserve and transmit it for the good of culture and society. Support for the humanities in these institutions bolsters their commitments to liberal education, their capacities for innovative research, and their ability to contribute substantially to debate about contemporary challenges.

Through the program in Higher Education and Scholarship in the Humanities, the Mellon Foundation assists select colleges, universities, and research institutes in the work of training scholars and producing scholarship in the humanities broadly conceived, and thereby contributing to culture and society. In practical terms, this means helping institutions and professional organization respond to the economic, demographic, financial, and technological challenges affecting higher education, supporting initiatives designed to enhance the learning experience of both undergraduate and graduate students in the humanities, and fostering collaborations within and among institutions that support disciplinary innovation, foster practices of diversity and inclusion, and promote the social value of the humanities.

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