

## FACULTY RESEARCH SEMINAR TIPS

In 2021 Clara Hardy (Humanities Center Director) spoke with as many past seminar directors as she could reach. This document is a distillation of those conversations.

### **So you're thinking about proposing a Faculty Research Seminar...**

- Think about finding a congenial colleague to co-direct; this model has worked well in the past, and provides both shared labor and instant interdisciplinarity/broadening of area beyond your own research.
- Framing a good seminar topic/question/area is a balancing act: too narrow and it will be difficult to attract applicants; too wide and it will be challenging to create intellectual coherence. Centering a methodology or theoretical framework rather than a theme can be one way around this. The HC director or past seminar leaders are great resources to help you think through the issues and tweak the framing.
- As you think about a co-director and a topic, you should also ask around to see who might be interested in participating (and if they'll be on campus during the seminar year); framing your call with particular colleagues in mind is a good idea. Leaning on them to apply/assuring them their project "counts"/ flattering them etc. is also fine!

**Congratulations! Your proposal has been selected, you've helped the HC Advisory Board select an amazing group of participants, and you're now dreaming of your seminar year. What's next?**

- SCHEDULE YOUR SEMINAR ASAP. Everyone should know their next year's teaching in the spring (always barring a global pandemic of course) and if you can get the meetings on everyone's calendar up front then they can schedule subsequent obligations around them. Seminars normally meet 3-4 times per term.
- A preliminary meeting in the spring can be very helpful to hear what everyone's project is and what their goals are for the year (people can be at all different stages of work and may have quite disparate goals). This is a great moment to determine:
  - the shape of the year (e.g. fall term for common readings and winter and spring term for individual presentations of work in progress? more even distribution of these two things throughout the year? etc)
  - how to compile readings (e.g. will the leader choose? will participants suggest readings important for their own work? how much reading per session is reasonable?) Note that the HC has a budget for buying books, and that Mary Drew can help with this as well as with scanning/distributing articles or chapters.
- Snacks/drinks during your meetings (always, again, barring a global pandemic) are welcome. The HC can subsidize this within reason.

**That went quick! Your seminar year is over, but still ahead is your Dialogos year. What's involved there?**

- Consider a meeting at the end of your seminar or the beginning of the following year just to talk through the seminar topic from your new vantage-point, and especially the connections that emerged during the course of your discussions. This can be really helpful as you think about your Dialogos sessions. Plus most seminar participants report that finding these connections and recurring themes is the most valuable and intellectually enjoyable aspect of participating in a seminar.
- At this meeting or in some venue, consider your options for sharing your work with the campus. Previous seminars have presented the fruits of their research/creative work in a wide variety of formats:
  - a series of conference-style panels (2-3 participants at a time, each giving a 10-15 minute presentation followed by questions/discussion);
  - a one-day symposium (potentially including external speakers, barring a global pandemic, along with seminar participants);
  - a more discussion-oriented round-table style presentation;
  - etc.
- It is ALSO possible to plan an additional event or events in conjunction with the Dialogos research presentations: a high-profile speaker, perhaps with a faculty reading group in advance; or other performance/event of some kind. Again, we have some budget for this, although higher-profile visitors will require co-sponsors.

**Take advantage of all your great colleagues!** The Humanities Center website lists all the past seminars and their directors; consult with any of them or any current or former Humanities Center director at any stage of this process. Everyone wants the seminars to work as well as possible, and will be happy to help you think things through.

The Faculty Research Seminar is a great opportunity to spend a year discussing ideas that are important to you with smart and interested colleagues. Don't miss your chance.