2015 CTI Seminar Proposals -- HUMANITIES

Africa: Moving Beyond Popular Culture
Beth Whitaker, Associate Professor of Political Science, UNC Charlotte
Most Americans' impressions of Africa are strongly influenced by portrayals in popular culture, including Hollywood movies, bestselling books, and videos that spread via social media. Celebrities like Bono, George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, and Ben Affleck also shape popular perceptions of Africa through their activism around selected causes. There is no doubt that such efforts have raised awareness about important issues in Africa and renewed interest in a continent that has long been marginalized within the international system. Even so, portrayals of Africa in popular culture often are over-simplified, formulaic, and paternalistic, reinforcing stereotypes about a continent and its people that can undermine genuine efforts to resolve ongoing problems. Instead of investigating the complex political, social, and economic processes at the root of Africa's challenges, popular culture frequently presents a common narrative of good versus evil that is simple to understand and easy to sell to well-intentioned consumers.

This CTI seminar will explore the history and politics of Africa by moving beyond popular culture and examining alternative representations of the continent, mainly from Africans themselves. In our late spring meetings, we will use Binyanvanga Wainaina's "How to Write about Africa" to start a discussion about the portrayal of Africa in popular culture. Viewing clips from movies like "Blood Diamond," "Hotel Rwanda," and "Kony 2012," we will critique the dominant narratives that are perpetuated by such works and the risks these can pose in the search for solutions. During the summer, seminar participants will read and view important works by African authors and directors such as Ngugi wa Th'iongo, Ousmane Sembène, Chinua Achebe, Mariama Ba, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and J.M. Coetzee. Children's versions of classics like "Sundiata" and Nelson Mandela's "Long Walk to Freedom" also will be included on the reading list. When we meet again in the fall, each seminar session will focus on a different Africa-related topic: pre-colonial state-building, resistance to colonialism, post-colonial politics, wars and conflict, ethnicity, and gender issues. We will compare and contrast the representations of these topics in popular culture and alternative works and supplement our readings with academic articles. Instead of dismissing popular movies and books entirely, particularly given their widespread availability, we will discuss how to use them in the classroom despite their shortcomings. During the last portion of the seminar, participants will develop their own curriculum units using popular representations of Africa as an entry-point to a deeper discussion and understanding of the continent's vast diversity and complexities.

This seminar may appeal most to social studies, English, and foreign language teachers, but will also be relevant to those from other disciplines. A math teacher might use population figures, income per capita, or inequality measures to illustrate key concepts, while a science teacher may reference Africa in a discussion of water purification methods or diamond mining. Health teachers can place topics such as malaria, HIV, and nutrition within a broader global context. In short, there are many topics that can be explored through a seminar on Africa.

Jurgen Buchenau, Professor and Chair of History, UNC Charlotte
Possible topics: story of immigration in general, including lots of biographical and autobiographical material on individual immigrants (both Latino/a and non-Latino/a). (1) Contemporary Latin America and its historical roots, focusing on its social and geographical diversity; (2) U.S.-Latin American relations, both historical and contemporary; (3) Anything related to Mexico.

History of Mexico. A survey of Mexican history from pre-Columbian times to the present. Special emphasis will be given to the Spanish conquest, the colonial economy, the independence period, the revolution, and relations with the United States. With contemporary focus on the 20th century, including the revolution and relations with the United States.
The United States and Latin America. An examination of the complex relationship between the United States and Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Topics include: U.S. territorial and economic expansion, cultural imperialism, and Latin American efforts to safeguard national sovereignty and to achieve economic development
Modern Latin America. A survey of Latin American history from 1826 to the present with emphasis on the economy and society. Special attention to twentieth-century revolutions and the role of the United States in Latin America.

An immigration seminar could focus on the period since Reconstruction (1877-Present), tracing the waves of immigration that have transformed the United States since then: Central and Eastern European, Chinese/Japanese, Latino/a etc. Emphasis on a collection of primary sources, problems in Immigration History, and a number of autobiographies/novels that depict the lives of men and women who made the United States their new permanent home, including an analysis of the slow and painful process of assimilation.

Ghosts in Theatre, Film, and the Brain
Mark Pizzato, Theatre, UNC Charlotte
This seminar explores connections between our physical brain, the internal theatres it stages, and specific spirit characters in drama and film—through theories and evidence from psychoanalysis and neuroscience. After considering those theories, we will apply them to prehistoric cave paintings, Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (an ancient Greek trilogy), Zeami's *Matsukaze* (a medieval Japanese Noh play), Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, and various films of these Shakespeare and Wilder plays, plus another recent film, *The Others*, by Alejandro Amenabar. Along the way, we'll investigate how the idea of Self can be illusory, how we're often performing for a ghostly Other, and how young people (in the plays listed above) are especially haunted by parental and peer influences, as their own identities take shape.

Inner and Outer Theatres
Mark Pizzato, Theatre, UNC Charlotte
The idea of "theatre" may be explored in various ways: (1) as an art form, (2) as everyday performances of roles and scripts, (3) as particular performance spaces, such as a "war theatre," playing field, or ritual relationship, (4) as the inner theatre of fantasies, dreams, and representations of reality within the brain, and (5) as a cosmic theatre with God, other supernatural beings, or our future descendents, watching the progress and pitfalls of evolution and culture, including our current actions. Beginning with an overview of theatrical practices in Western culture, from prehistoric cave art, to ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman theatre, to medieval, early modern, modern, and postmodern performances, we'll consider how such traces of ritual and art reflect the inner theatres of our brain's today, in various ways. How do our basic brain structures, which we share with humans in these earlier periods, set up certain conflicts within and between us, involving order and freedom, language and movement, masculine and feminine, rational and emotional elements? How does knowing about the brain's inner theatre and our culture's outer theatres increase our awareness of unconscious, impulsive tendencies toward conflicts, fantasies, and projections—that might be better resolved?

The Neuro-Psychology of Plot and Character in Playwriting
Mark Pizzato, Theatre, UNC Charlotte
Today, there is a conventional formula for playwriting and screenwriting, based on the Euro-American tradition of a well-made melodrama or comedy, playing upon our evolutionary drives

and brain structures (from ego survival and reproduction to various emotions and ideas in our neural networks). We experience this basic, melodramatic or comedic formula—with good versus evil characters, involved in serious injury and vengeance, or with opponents engaged in funny mishaps and misunderstandings—quite often through movies, television, and videogames. By learning about this common formula, and its variations in certain genres, we can not only teach playwriting and interpret works of art and popular culture, but also see how it influences our daily reality, especially through personal prejudices and the media's representation of news events. Understanding how the dominant playwriting formula relates to specific brain structures and emotional states, as well as our cultural heritage, can help us to see alternatives—in art, entertainment, and politics.

Peace Education: Psychological Factors That Endorse War
Rick Gay, Professor of Educational Studies, Davidson College

Admittedly, most Americans would prefer to live in an era of peace, instead of an era of war. Why then, when confronted with the possibility of war, do so many Americans thoroughly embrace and support it? For example, one recent opinion poll reveals that twenty-eight percent of Americans believe that President Obama made a mistake when he withdrew forces from Iraq. During this seminar on Peace Education, we will confront the love/hate relationship most Americans have with war by examining psychological factors that surface in public school classrooms and serve to endorse war. In *Peace Education: How We Come to Love and Hate War* (2012), educational philosopher Nel Noddings identifies six factors that promote war: patriotism, hatred, delight in spectacles, masculinity, religious extremism, and the search for existential meaning. In our readings and discussions, we will examine all six factors in detail and posit ways to incorporate the exploration/critiquing of these issues in our classrooms.
Literature and history courses invite the study of selections from the *Iliad*, the World War I poetry of Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, and the recent poetry of Brian Turner in *Here, Bullet*. Mathematics instructors might pose problems such as “How many schools could be built for the price of one heavy bomber?” Or, they might be interested in the writings of famous mathematician and philosopher, Bertrand Russell. Music classes might study martial music, the role of the bugle in military operations, or counterculture protest music. Physical Education teachers could explore the connections between sports and warfare. Photography from the Spanish Civil War and World War I could be introduced in art courses. And, of course, science courses invite many ethical questions relating to the development of weaponry.
Nel Noddings hopes, as I do, that opening such discussions “will encourage more people to oppose war,” or at least think more critically about it.

Origins of Language
Ron Lunsford, Professor of English, UNC Charlotte

In this seminar, we will explore in some depth the current hypotheses on language origins. When did humans first talk? As it turns out, this question may be inseparable from the question of why humans talk—that is, what evolutionary advantages did language provide for humans? Once these questions are raised, other questions soon follow, such as: What is the relationship between language and thought? Do other species have language? These, and many other questions, were put on hiatus in 1866 when The Linguistic Society of Paris officially banned discussion of the subject of origins of language. One might find the banning of a topic of study by a group of scholars dedicated to the search for new knowledge odd in any circumstance; in the context of the late nineteenth century, some 17 years after the publication of *Origins of the Species*, this ban seems more than odd—indeed deeply perplexing. What could account for such a ban? In part, the ban could be blamed on the fact that the topic of language does not lend itself to direct physical evidence in the way that studies of the celestial bodies, earth, or even the human anatomy do. Where does one go to find records of how humans used language

10,000 years ago? 100,000 years ago? Certainly not to fossil records, not to recordings, not even to written records? When the ban began to lose its grip on linguistic thinkers in the late twentieth century, those who turned their attention to origins found they could not limit their investigations to one discipline: linguistics; rather, they had to broaden their search to include work done in such fields as archaeology, psychology, and anthropology. Among those pursing this research, there are various hypotheses as to when, where, and how language first appeared and, depending on the hypothesis, as to whether language actually precedes humans in the evolutionary process. It is not difficult to see, in retrospect, why this topic was banned in 1866 and why it is still problematic for some: the answers we will ultimately find will no doubt affect our conception of what it means to be human.

This broad interdisciplinary approach to the study of language origins provides a natural point of contact between the information on origins we will be examining in this seminar and the individual studies participants might undertake. Some example inquiries might explore connections between human language and:

1) music
2) thought
3) reasoning
4) mathematics
5) culture
6 writing
7) languages of other species

Seminar participants might look at the content they teach through the lens of our seminar.Thus, a music teacher might explore the evolutionary connections between human language and music; a philosophy teacher might explore connections between human language and thought, or between human reasoning and language; a mathematics teacher might explore the "language" of mathematics in light of human language; a sociology teacher might explore issues of culture and human language; a psychology teacher might investigate modern research into how language "works" in the brain in light of the evolutionary history of language. A writing teacher might examine relationships between oral and written language with an eye to pedagogical implications for the teaching of writing; a biologist might explore connections between human language and language of other species. As we shall see, the interdisciplinary nature of this study, which makes it what some have called the "hardest problem in science," also makes it among the most interesting.

Capitalism
Russell Crandall, Associate Professor of Political Science, Davidson College
The course surveys the history and ideas behind the evolution of one of the most powerful ideologies of the modern age. The course will study some of the key episodes in the evolution of history such as the Industrial Revolutions, Great Depression, Great Recession. Students will be exposed to some of the seminal thinkers that deeply influenced the shape of capitalism such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and John Maynard Keynes. We will spend the last part of the course looking at contemporary dynamics in capitalism that include income inequality, globalization, labor unions, pro free market philosophers, and anti-capitalism activism.

Globalization
Russell Crandall, Associate Professor of Political Science, Davidson College
This course surveys the historical evolution and current dynamics of the controversial and powerful phenomenon known as globalization. It surveys the social, political, and economic forces that shape globalization-and vice versa. We will explore the various debates such as free trade pacts, environmental protection, labor unions, capital flows, and global development and

poverty. Students will have gained a strong sense of the forces, debates, and controversies that define our contemporary Age of Globalization and how it might look into the future.

Grand Strategy
Russell Crandall, Associate Professor of Political Science, Davidson College
This seminar examines the historical evolution and current application of Grand Strategy, or a country¹s foreign policy considered at the highest level of thought and abstraction. We will read seminal works in what can be considered the Grand Strategy canon from ancient times through the modern era. Students will also examine in depth the various elements of contemporary American grand strategy with regard to various conflicts including the Middle East, China, North Korea, and Russia. To complement our coursework and discussions, students will view films and read novels that address key Grand Strategy themes.

Teaching Empathy and Human Rights Using Children's and Young Adult Literature about War and Genocide
Sarah Minslow, English Department
I propose a seminar related to teaching the topics of war and genocide to young people using children's and young adult literature to spark conversations, raise questions, and introduce complex aspects of real-world atrocities without overwhelming young readers. I teach two classes that are cross-listed as English and International Studies/Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights courses. They are War and Genocide in Children's Literature and Refugees in Literature and Film. Drawing from the materials used in both courses and from a summer research project I'm conducting to assess what is being taught about the Holocaust in CMS middle schools, in this seminar, participants will be introduced to a range of fiction and non-fiction texts targeted at young audiences. We will develop a list of criteria about what authors should or should not do when writing about atrocity for young audiences and use those criteria to evaluate the texts and consider how they may be used in the classroom to teach history, social studies, human rights, and critical literacy skills. Some of the texts we will examine include Eve Bunting's Terrible Things, Shaun Tan's The Rabbits, Lois Lowry's Number the Stars, Breaking Stalin's Nose, Persepolis, and Adam Bagdasarian's Forgotten Fire. From these exercises, participants will be able to develop curriculum and lesson plans that incorporate literature of atrocity for young people and share teaching strategies for using literature to teach these tough subjects to young people.

What Makes a Nation?
Shelley Rigger, East Asican Studies and Political Science, Davidson College
Over time, human societies have organized themselves in many different ways. We have lived in clans, kingdoms, tribes, empires and many other types of communities. In the past few hundred years, we increasingly have organized ourselves into nation-states; today, almost no one lives beyond the reach of one or another national government. This seminar will look at both sides of the "nation-state" concept – the nation, by which we mean the people and territory that are being governed, and the state, by which we mean the institutions of government. What makes a nation? Is it a matter of territory? Identity? Government? Is nationhood rooted in primordial identities, or is it constructed by societies in the process of living together? If a shared identity constitutes a nation, that works for some countries (Japan, France), but what about the U.S.? What makes the United States a "nation"? We will read theories of nationhood and nationalism and look at specific examples from around the world to explore these questions. The seminar leader will provide theoretical readings for the early sessions, but the decision

about what countries we want to look at as examples of nation-state formation will be made by the Fellows, based on their interests and the content of their curriculum units.

What options exist for organizing states? How do different state structures work? Why do different nations use different state institutions? For example, what's the difference between the British parliamentary system and the American system, and why didn't our founders follow the British example when they set up our institutions? What were they trying to achieve, and did they achieve it? Here again, the seminar leader will provide some introductory materials to help crack open these questions, but the Fellows will determine what countries and systems we focus on in detail.

This seminar will explore theories of nationhood, nationalism and state formation as well as specific examples from around the world to gain a more complete understanding of how the nation-state has become the dominant form of social organization in the modern world.