Humanities Center Seeking Faculty Fellows for 2017-2018

THE SECULAR AND THE SPIRITUAL

The Humanities Center of the University of Hartford requests applications from faculty interested in becoming one of the distinguished Faculty Fellows of the Humanities Center for the 2017-2018 academic year, by offering a lecture focused on their own project related to the seminar topic of “The Secular and the Spiritual” during the Spring 2018 Humanities Lecture Series.

Richard Freund, Greenberg Professor of Jewish History, will lead the Humanities Center Seminar for this next year. He has selected the theme of “The Secular and the Spiritual” for the seminar. He requests applications for faculty fellows from all disciplines and colleges in the University. Here is a description of the seminar:

This year-long seminar on “The Secular and the Spiritual” will explore the disconnect that has developed over recent years regarding the embrace of secularism as a value system and the continued identification – nonetheless – with deeply-held spiritual ideas. For instance, Americans, and especially our college-age students, have characterized their religious identities in a recent PEW Research Center survey (September 14, 2016) as reaching almost 25% as “none.” On the one hand this might appear to be about the insignificance of religion in their lives – creating the impression that they are not interested in the transcendent and the spiritual. In fact many of these same individuals self-identify in exceedingly high numbers as “spiritual.” Through an analysis of this seeming opposition, students in the seminar will study how secularism developed and how spirituality can be examined through the lens of the different disciplines of the university.

The fall semester, which focuses on the “secular” aspect of the course, will explore how the works of certain individuals (such as Galileo, Freud, Darwin, Curie, Einstein, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Daniel Dennet) have defined the world and our values through the lens of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, ultimately leading to a secular viewpoint that does not require the language and formulations of denominational religions.

The spring semester, focusing on the “spiritual” aspect of the course, aims to help students better understand the role that spirituality and denominational religion plays in their lives but also how the transcendent experiences of others are expressed through the arts. We would be looking for faculty from art, art history, architecture, communication, music, dance, cinema, theatre, psychology, history, sociology, philosophy, literature, politics, education and the health sciences to be able to delineate how spirituality is understood, portrayed, used (and abused) and shared in the new media in a 21st-century society that is diverse and both secularly oriented and spiritual at the same time.

The advantages and responsibilities of being a Faculty Fellow include the following:

- Faculty Fellows will be working on a scholarly or pedagogical project in a context that will offer encouragement and a testing site for the development of their ideas.
- Each Faculty Fellow will give a talk as part of the Spring 2018 series of lectures associated with the theme. The lecture will give each Fellow an opportunity to present the results of his or her research on the project.

- Fellows receive a stipend of $1,500 to enable them to read, write, do research, and prepare their spring lecture.

- Faculty Fellows are encouraged to participate in the honors course in the fall term, and are expected to attend the Tuesday evening talks by other Fellows during the Spring lecture series.

All faculty interested in becoming a Faculty Fellow of the Humanities Center for the 2017-2018 academic year, please email a one-page proposal that describes the focus of your interest as it is related to the course topic, “The Secular and the Spiritual,” and the material to be addressed in your spring talk, along with a CV, to Nicholas Ealy (ealy@hartford.edu) and Richard Freund (freund@hartford.edu) no later than March 31, 2017.

For more information about the Humanities Center at the University of Hartford, contact Nicholas Ealy, Interim Director, at ealy@hartford.edu. T. Stores, who will serve as Director in 2017-2018, may be reached at stores@hartford.edu. For more information about the Honors Program, contact Don Jones, Director, at djones@hartford.edu.