

HRI-Mellon Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in Public Humanities, 2023–2024

The Humanities Research Institute, supported by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, invites applications for a Pre-Doctoral Fellow in Public Humanities for the 2023–2024 academic year.

Overview:

The Public Humanities is an interdisciplinary approach to engaging audiences beyond the walls of the university. Combining methods, theories and practices from humanities disciplines in projects with a public- and/or community-facing stance, public humanities work models the value and relevance of history, philosophy, literature and the visual arts in action. That work can serve as a form of community knowledge-building and public engagement that make manifest the role of humanistic inquiry in civic life and culture. And, such work happens most effectively when it is built on reciprocal relationships with community members and/or partners. We are especially interested in proposals rooted in research-based projects that imagine, or extend existing, connections with contemporary, real-time issues.

At the center of the HRI-Mellon Pre-Doctoral Fellowship is a one-year residency with the Odyssey Project, a free college-credit earning program for income-eligible adults seeking access to higher education outside traditional pathways ([visit the HRI website for information on Odyssey](#) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign). While in residence, the Public Humanities Fellow will participate in The Odyssey Project's activities, co-thinking and co-learning with the Odyssey Project staff to develop the public- and/or community-facing dimensions of her/his/their research. The fellow will undertake a research project that explores themes connecting the fellow's field of study, the public humanities, and the Odyssey Project as an example of community-oriented public engagement.

Please be advised that due to planning challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement with the Odyssey Project and/or other community-related activities may need to be remote during the fellowship period. Applicants should consider the need for remote activities in their proposals and the possibility they will need to be flexible in the event of changing circumstances.

Advanced PhD and MFA students from all humanities and arts disciplines, including the humanities-inflected social sciences, whose research and teaching lie in the area of the public humanities, are encouraged to apply.

Eligibility

Only PhD and MFA students enrolled in humanities or arts terminal degree programs, including the humanities-inflected social sciences from the Urbana-Champaign campus are eligible to apply. Applicants should have advanced far enough in their course of graduate study to be proposing working on their *final* research projects, such as a dissertation or thesis, during the span of the fellowship year. Ideally, the application is launched *after* the preliminary examinations have been completed.

Terms

The HRI-Mellon Pre-Doctoral Fellow in the Public Humanities will receive a nine-month \$20,000 stipend with tuition and partial fee waiver as well as a \$1,500 research fund.

The Public Humanities Fellow is required to maintain residency on the Illinois campus (residing within a 20-mile radius) during the award year and to arrange an independent study with a designated faculty mentor that focuses on the fellow's public humanities research project. In consultation with the HRI director, the fellow will develop an annotated bibliography of public humanities scholarship that will help serve as a credential in the field. The fellow will also be in residence for the Odyssey Project's evening classes and regular meetings with HRI and the Odyssey Project's staff to discuss the work of the program. Applicants should make certain that their teaching and research obligations do not prevent them from participating fully in the Odyssey Project experience and should identify in their narrative statement any applications being made for other campus or external grants and fellowships. By June 1, 2024, the Public Humanities Fellow will submit a one-page report to the Assistant Director for Education and Outreach on his/her/their activities during the fellowship period.

Faculty mentors (tenure-line or specialized) will be expected to meet monthly with the student to guide the final project and quarterly with the HRI Assistant Director for Education and Outreach. Faculty mentors will also submit a one-page report on the fellow's activities and the mentor's advising work to the Assistant Director for Education and Outreach by June 1, 2024. In recognition of their service, faculty mentors will receive \$1000 in research funds.

Application Guidelines

Applicants must submit the following materials as a single attached PDF document to apply-hri@illinois.edu. Documents should be double-spaced and in 12-pt. Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins; materials that exceed the required length will not be considered. The letters of recommendation should be submitted separately by the recommending faculty:

- A 100-word abstract with project title.
- A current curriculum vitae, including a list of all Illinois graduate courses taken, papers published, presentations made, and assistantships and fellowships held (maximum 5 pages; this need not be double-spaced, but please consider the committee and render it legible).
- A statement of no more than 1,000 words describing the applicant's research on the proposed project, including preparation to undertake this research and all progress on the project to date and discussion of the choice and suitability of the designated faculty mentor.
- A PDF of the student's official transcript. This should be requested through the registrar.
- Two (2) letters of recommendation, one of which must come from the faculty member supervising the student's dissertation. The faculty mentor may, but is not required to be, one of the letter-writers. Recommendation letters should speak to the applicant's readiness and commitment to engaging in a public humanities research project. The dissertation advisor's letter should also address how the project articulates with the applicant's larger job and career development plans. Recommenders should email their letters directly to apply-hri@illinois.edu, specifying the applicant's name in the subject heading.
- [A signed agreement](#) (PDF) indicating the faculty mentor's willingness to oversee the applicant's research project. The applicant is responsible for submitting the signed mentorship agreement as part of the application materials.

In the narrative statement, the applicant should describe her/their/his research in reasonable detail, explaining its significance to the work of the Odyssey Project and the public humanities, as well as addressing the applicant's readiness to undertake the project. The statement should also indicate the applicant's willingness to be in residence with the Odyssey Project and attend the regularly scheduled meetings described under the "Terms" section. Finally, the statement should include any specific past experience or future ambitions that the applicant brings to the study of the public humanities.

Selection Criteria

The applications will be reviewed by the HRI Director, the Assistant Director for Education and Outreach, and the Odyssey Project Advisor and Student Experience Coordinator.

Submissions will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- The relationship of the project to the public humanities
- The relationship of the project to the Odyssey Project and/or community-oriented work
- The viability of the research project
- The applicant's preparation to undertake the proposed research
- The quality of the narrative proposal, and
- The letters of support.

Deadline

Applications must be submitted to apply-hri@illinois as one PDF (letters of recommendation should be submitted separately, directly to HRI, by the recommending faculty) by 5:00 PM on January 20, 2023, after which applications will no longer be accepted.

Deadline extensions will not be granted. The review committee will consider only complete applications. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all documentation is complete, and that referees submit their letters before the deadline.

Notification

All applications will be acknowledged via email, and all applicants will be notified in the latter part of the spring 2023 semester, when the search has concluded. Please do not contact HRI about the status of an application. Because of the volume of applications HRI receives, we are unable to answer questions about individual applications.

Questions about this fellowship may be addressed to Alaina Pincus, apincus2@illinois.edu.