Pauline “Polly” Turner Strong is intrigued by the intersections between the humanities and contemporary social life. And this has been true for a very long time. Her research on the ways that American identity is shaped by selective representations of Native American culture led to collaborative projects in the early 1990s on the teaching of the Columbian Quincentenary in U.S. public schools. Her community service (for example, as board president of the local council of Camp Fire USA) has informed, and been informed by, research on the development of 20th century American youth organizations. As an anthropologist whose research interests range from culture and gender studies to history, literature and media, she has put multi-disciplinarity into practice through working to design the Bridging Disciplines Program for undergraduates as well as the new Museum Studies and Indigenous Studies graduate certificate programs.

Strong sees the Humanities Institute as a critical venue for “breaking down barriers and building bridges across disciplines and between the campus and the community.” Her involvement with the Institute dates to Fall 2001, when she was a member of the first Faculty Fellows Seminar on “The Future of Disciplinary Knowledges.” She also participated in a subsequent seminar, “Remembering & Forgetting, Collecting & Discarding.”

Humanities Institute Welcomes New Director Pauline Strong

New HI Director Pauline Strong (right) leads the Faculty Fellows Seminar with Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi (center). Photograph by Rebecca Scoggin McEntee

Lecture Series Explores Moments of Crisis

AT THIS MOMENT OF NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CRISIS and potential transformation, the Humanities Institute’s faculty fellows seminar is exploring the historical and contemporary conceptions, roles, and impacts of intellectual life and cultural work in times of political, social, cultural, or economic upheaval.

Also on the theme of “Intellectual Life at Moments of Crisis” is the complementary series:

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2009
Martín Espada, University of Massachusetts Amherst
7:30 p.m.
“The Republic of Poetry: A Reading and Commentary”
Quadrangle Room, Texas Union

Friday, Nov. 13, 2009
Richard Schechner, New York University
7:30 p.m.
“Dionysus in 69 in ’09”
Avaya Auditorium (ACE 2.302)

Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2010
Wendy Brown, University of California, Berkeley
7:30 p.m.
“Privatizing the Public and the Future of the Humanities”
Avaya Auditorium (ACE 2.302)

Wednesday, March 10, 2010
Rosalyn Deutsche, Barnard College
7:30 p.m.
“Hiroshima after Iraq: A Study in Art and War”
Blanton Museum Auditorium
Director's Column

Pauline Strong

As we settle into fall, the work of the Humanities Institute is in full swing. Our Faculty Fellows Seminar is gathering together professors from the liberal arts, fine arts, social work, business, communication, and medicine to consider this year’s theme, "Intellectual Life at Moments of Crisis." At the undergraduate level, our Difficult Dialogues courses are engaging students in informed dialogue on the controversial topics of immigration, H.I.V./AIDS, religion and science, religion and sexuality, and race and policy.

We are pairing our new Community Sabbatical grantees with faculty mentors to conduct research that will directly benefit the work of the grantees’ nonprofit organizations. And we are working with the Austin Public Library and the office of the new mayor to choose a compelling book and arrange programming for the Mayor’s Book Club.

Our public events begin on October 15 with our first Distinguished Visiting Lecture, featuring the esteemed Latino poet and activist, Martín Espada. This series will continue on November 13 with a screening and lecture by director and performance studies maven Richard Schechner, this year’s Cline Visiting Professor in the Humanities. Schechner will visit Austin twice, both to work with the Rude Mechanicals theatre company in producing their reprise of his 1969 production, Dionysus in 69, and to engage with students, faculty, and audiences on the way he incorporates classical themes in his work in the theatre.

The lecture series will continue in the spring with additional talks looking at “Intellectual Life at Moments of Crisis” from the perspectives of political science and art history. A third lecture in the spring, the Paul and Mary Ho Distinguished Lecture in China Studies, features MIT professor Jing Wang speaking on “NGO 2.0: An Experiment with Social Media in China.” I warmly invite you to attend these lectures, sure to inspire lively discussion.

This year’s programming comes on the heels of an unforgettable year, highlighted by the week-long visit of the Iranian human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Shirin Ebadi. Partnering with the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies and the Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice, we had the honor of facilitating first-hand dialogue with Dr. Ebadi in April 2009, on the eve of tumultuous events in her country.

In May we joined the families and friends of our third class of Free Minds graduates to celebrate their passage from one stage to another of their engagement with the humanities. And last summer we brought the Living Newspaper program into the Texas State History Museum, where high school students researched and dramatized the stories of immigrants past and present as part of the museum’s Forgotten Gateway exhibit.

Strong partnerships on and off campus have always been key to the success and growth of the Humanities Institute. Dean Randy Diehl of the College of Liberal Arts has strengthened his support of our seminar and lecture series, and HRC Director Tom Staley has continued to make office and seminar space available in the beautiful Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center. We have not been able to continue all of our programs in these leaner times, but through new campus partnerships we have ensured the continuation of the Free Minds program (now housed in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement) and the Living Newspaper human rights program (now administered by the Performance as Public Practice Program in the Department of Theatre and Dance). We are most grateful for the support of Dr. Greg Vincent of the DDCE, Dr. Charlotte Canning and Dr. Holly Williams of Theatre and Dance, Dean Diehl, and Dr. Staley.

We continue to appreciate the strong support of our community programs by local foundations, including two new donors: the TG Public Benefit Grant Program (for Free Minds) and the Webber Family Foundation (for Living Newspapers).

The Humanities Institute has long been dear to my heart, and I am grateful to founding director Evan Carton for all he has done to envision the Institute and make it thrive. Here’s to you, Evan, and to all our friends and partners. I look forward to continuing to “think in community” with each of you, and I welcome your suggestions and support as we continue to make the HI one of the most forward-looking humanities centers in the country.
The Humanities Institute is pleased to welcome Professor Richard Schechner, this year’s C. L. and Henriette Cline Centennial Visiting Professor in the Humanities. The University Professor of Performance Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, Schechner is a founding figure in the interdisciplinary field of performance studies. While on campus in November and December, Schechner will offer a public lecture in the Humanities Institute’s Distinguished Visiting Lecture series and meet with faculty, students, and performing artists in the community.

In conjunction with his residency in Austin, Rude Mechanicals will be remounting The Performance Group’s interpretation of Euripides’ The Bacchae, entitled Dionysus in 69. Created collectively and directed by Schechner, Dionysus in 69 ran for a year and a half from 1967 to 1969. It is widely regarded as one of the germinal works of American experimental theatre. Rude Mechanicals will be remounting the piece as faithfully as possible to the original production. Schechner will lead the Rudes in several workshops and rehearsals leading up to the production, which will be directed by Shawn Sides, who worked with Schechner while studying performance studies at NYU, and Madge Darlington, a graduate of UT.

Schechner’s experimental approach to the theory and production of performance incorporates a broad multicultural perspective on the purpose of performance. It is undergirded by an interdisciplinary combination of anthropology, sociology, psychology, folklore, popular culture, feminist and queer theory, post-colonial studies, cultural studies, theatre, and dance. One of Schechner’s most significant contributions is his ability both to draw from these disparate disciplines and to refigure the relations among them.

Schechner is known for harnessing the vast amount of theoretical and practical work that has come before him, bringing it to his productions without being shackled by conventions and assumptions of what theatre is or should be. Dionysus in 69 showcases one of Schechner’s six axioms for environmental theatre — that “all the space is used for performance” — through groundbreaking and innovative audience/performer interactions.

Schechner founded the Performance Studies department at NYU, which has been emulated in dozens of programs in the U.S. and Europe. He is also the artistic director of East Coast Artists (New York), editor of TDR (The Drama Review), and general editor of the Worlds of Performance series (Routledge). His numerous publications include, among others, the books Environmental Theatre, Between Theatre and Anthropology, The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance, and Performance Studies—An Introduction. As a theatre director, Schechner has directed over twenty professional productions, many of which, like Dionysus in 69, are new creations of classic works.

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HI & Austin Lyric Opera: “Dialogues of the Austinites”

In April 2009, the Humanities Institute co-sponsored a month-long symposium with Austin Lyric Opera designed to enrich its production of Frances Poulenc’s opera, Dialogues of the Carmelites.

Dubbed “Dialogues of the Austinites” by Molly Browning, ALO’s Director of Public Relations, the series explored issues such as religious tolerance and political turmoil, and invited audience participation. Kevin Patterson, General Director of ALO, credited the HI for its contribution to ALO in several public appearances.

“The value that the Humanities Institute brought in its collaboration with ALO was a reinforcement of the academic perspective that allowed us to explore not only the main themes of the opera but to branch into themes that we deal with on the global stage.”

The Institute helped to bring internationally acclaimed opera expert Fred Plotkin to Austin and arranged for UT experts to lend their insights into various aspects of the production. UT contributors to the program included: HI founder Evan Carton; Eric Drott, a faculty member in the Butler School of Music; and HI programs and development manager Paula Kothmann.

Special thanks to Daniela Bini, who chairs the Department of French and Italian, and Ernest Butler, staunch UT and arts supporter, for publicizing the symposium, which attracted an attendance level of over 550. The HI has a long history of collaborating with ALO, including on its production of the operas Dead Man Walking (2003) and The Flying Dutchman (2004).
Hi Welcomes Community Sabbatical Grantees

The Humanities Institute is pleased to introduce four new Community Sabbatical Grantees for the 2009-10 academic year. These leaders of central Texas nonprofit organizations will each receive funds to cover one month of flexible research leave as well as access to UT libraries and databases. The grantees will work with UT faculty consultants on projects designed to enhance their ability to serve their organizations and constituencies. Please join us in welcoming the following grantees to our community!

**Linda C. Brucker**

_A Legacy of Giving_

Linda C. Brucker is the founder and Executive Director of A Legacy of Giving, whose mission is to empower children through philanthropy education to become more engaged in improving their communities and world. A Legacy of Giving is based on the belief that if children learn to be compassionate in their earliest years, they will continue to be engaged in their communities and offer their gifts of time, talent and treasure as adults.

Linda will use her Community Sabbatical Research Leave to explore the possibilities of expanding A Legacy of Giving from 14 central Texas counties to the entire state of Texas. Linda would like to create a model to grow A Legacy of Giving and connect with partner organizations that will facilitate training.

**Mike Evans**

_Urban Roots_

Mike Evans is the Co-coordinator for the Urban Roots program. Urban Roots is a youth development program that uses sustainable agriculture to transform the lives of young people and to increase access to healthy food in Austin. On a one-and-a-half acre farm in East Austin, young people learn to grow food and serve their community; they also learn job and life skills including how to work hard, be responsible at a job, and cook and eat more healthfully.

Mike will use his Community Sabbatical Research Leave to explore the possibilities of creating a curriculum that addresses food justice. Mike will research how educators can engage youth in the issue of food justice through interactive hands-on educational activities. These curriculum enhancements will be designed with the idea that food is a basic human right and everyone, regardless of race, class, religion, or background, should have access to fresh, healthy, affordable food.

**Deliana Garcia**

_Migrant Clinicians Network_

Deliana Garcia is a member of the senior management team for The Migrant Clinicians Network (MCN), a national clinical network that works toward health care justice for the mobile poor. With uncompromising commitment to clinically sound, culturally appropriate and technically accurate training, education, research and program development, MCN serves primary care clinicians and communities nationally and internationally.

During her Research Leave, Deliana will seek to determine if the provision of transborder patient navigation services to the mobile poor is economically defensible. Patient navigation consists of enrolling the patient in the program, followed by identification of a health care source in a new location after the patient moves from the enrolling site, and transfer of the patient’s medical records once a source is identified. This process is repeated as necessary to see the patient through to the end of treatment.

**Tim Staley**

_Austin Public Library Friends Foundation_

Tim Staley is the Executive Director of the Austin Public Library Friends Foundation and manages the day-to-day operations of the organization. The Foundation is a support organization for the Austin Public Library. Its mission is to support and strengthen the Austin Public Library by increasing public awareness about the Library as well as its importance to the community, and by raising funds to improve its collections, programs, and services.

Tim intends to use his Community Sabbatical Research Leave to explore ways of expanding the role of the central public library in 21st century America. Several cities across America have built downtown central libraries that have reasserted the public library’s relevance in this age of rapidly developing information technology. These libraries have been designed and built to offer a vast array of services and cultural programs that have redefined the public library. Tim plans to research how Austin’s new central library can reach its potential as a dynamic institution capable of enhancing the lives of each of its community’s members.
Public Forums

O’Neil, a visiting professor at the UT School of Law during the 2008-2009 academic year, addressed recent debates about the teaching of evolution in Texas schools, as well as embryonic stem cell research. Daniel Bolnick, Assistant Professor of Biology, John Bugbee, Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, Ann Cvetkovich, Professor of English, and Denné Reed, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, joined O’Neil in leading the dialogue.

Members of the audience participated in a discussion moderated by Pauline Strong, HI Director and Principal Investigator for the Difficult Dialogues Program. The Public Dialogue on Religion, Science, and Academic Freedom was the first public forum sponsored by Difficult Dialogues under its expanded mission, made possible by a second round of funding from the Ford Foundation.

On October 22, 2009, a second public forum will be held: “Many Voices, Many Stories: Dialogues About Immigration in a Public Museum,” led by Dr. Suzanne Seriff, Senior Lecturer in Anthropology.

National Conferences
In June 2009, members of the UT Difficult Dialogues team traveled to Columbia, Missouri, to join teams from the University of Missouri and the University of Alaska in leading and participating in training sessions designed to introduce the Difficult Dialogues Initiative to other Big 12 universities.

Pauline Strong presented UT’s Difficult Dialogues undergraduate seminar model, and, with H.W. Perry, Associate Professor of Government, led a discussion of the ways in which the UT Difficult Dialogues program teaches students and faculty about academic freedom.

Melissa Biggs, Difficult Dialogues program coordinator, participated in a three-day Interactive Theatre workshop. Michele Guzmán, Assistant Vice President for Diversity Education Initiatives, also attended. The Difficult Dialogues program is collaborating with UT’s Diversity Education Initiatives to provide faculty training workshops in 2009-10.

In October, UT will host a national conference of Difficult Dialogues administrators, sponsored by the Ford Foundation. Professor David Rabban, of the University of Texas School of Law, will give a presentation on academic freedom, and Dr. Seriff will discuss how she stimulated dialogue in her Forgotten Gateway exhibit on immigration.

New Courses, Resources
The program moved into the fall by hosting a training session for faculty new to the Difficult Dialogues seminar model and those interested in proposing future Difficult Dialogues seminars.

Two new Difficult Dialogues undergraduate seminars debut this year. Suzanne Seriff, who curated the current Bob Bullock Museum exhibit Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America through Galveston Island, is teaching “Immigration and Cultural Pluralism.” Shannon Cavanagh, Assistant Professor of Sociology, is offering Difficult Dialogues: H.I.V./AIDS.

In addition, an online Difficult Dialogues resource manual will soon be published on the HI website. Materials will include strategies for teaching dialogue, dealing with controversial topics in the classroom, and academic freedom.

Difficult Dialogues Gets New Program Coordinator
Melissa Biggs joined the HI staff in June 2009, as program coordinator for the Difficult Dialogues program.

A Ph.D. candidate in Social Anthropology, Melissa brings a background in curriculum writing, teacher training, and cultural diversity to her new position.

“It’s exciting to work with an interdisciplinary program, one that reaches out not only to students and faculty, but to the broader community as well,” she says.

Anyone interested in being involved in Difficult Dialogues courses, workshops, and public forums should contact Melissa at dialogues@humanitiesinstitute.utexas.edu.
Free Minds Project Graduates Third Class

On May 19, Grace Elizabeth addressed her classmates and a standing-room only crowd at the third Free Minds graduation ceremony.

“We were all drawn here on our volition, for our various reasons and with different agendas,” she said. “But the one thing we all had in common from day one was a strong desire to improve ourselves. Each one of us felt compelled to fill out the application and show up for the interview because something deep inside told us it was where we were supposed to be.”

The 14 graduates of the 2009 Free Minds class were right where they were supposed to be that night: on stage at the Prothro Theater accepting the enthusiastic applause of their family, friends, and supporters. After two semesters and a curriculum that included Toni Morrison, Plato’s *Republic*, and the U.S. Constitution, they had much to celebrate. It was an exciting year, with classes meeting on both Election Day and Inauguration Day, and field trips to see a Shakespeare performance and to tour the Blanton Museum.

This year’s graduation included an awards ceremony for children enrolled in the Camp Fire USA program offered for students’ children, and a presentation of medals by alumni of the program’s first and second years. Elizabeth, who was selected by her classmates to represent them, closed her address with a call to action: “Congratulations, my fellow classmates—your path is illuminated, your only job is to walk it.”

Changes Come to Free Minds

In September the Free Minds Project moved from its home in the Humanities Institute to the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, headed by Dr. Gregory Vincent. In its three years at the Humanities Institute, Free Minds became a vital community program that now has nearly 50 alumni in the Austin area.

Free Minds will be a primary project in the division, with resources geared to making it sustainable—both financially and programmatically—for many years to come. Project Director Vivé Griffith works closely with Dr. Shannon Speed, Assistant Vice President for Community Engagement. The program will have its physical home at the Community Engagement Center on East 11th Street, where it will be easily accessible for students.

Also new this year is an advanced class for Free Minds alumni. Alumni have the opportunity to take two additional Free Minds classes, earning credits toward their degrees while creating an extended intellectual community that bolsters them in their educational and professional pursuits. A fall *Introduction to Theatre* is under way. Taught by ACC faculty member Marcus McQuirter with writing instruction by Vivé Griffith, it integrates a traditional theatre curriculum with class guests in a variety of disciplines, attendance at plays, and a project that asks students to envision their futures and create a performance around them. A government course for alumni is planned for the spring.

Free Minds will recruit a new class for the 2010-11 academic year. Founding HI director Evan Carton and current director Pauline Strong will continue to be involved as advisors.

“Free Minds Director Vivé Griffith watches as Free Minds graduate Grace Elizabeth addresses her classmates.

“We were all drawn here on our volition, for our various reasons and with different agendas. But the one thing we all had in common from day one was a strong desire to improve ourselves. Each one of us felt compelled to fill out the application and show up for the interview because something deep inside told us it was where we were supposed to be.”

— Grace Elizabeth, 2009 Free Minds graduate
DURING THE HUMANITIES INSTITUTE’S FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION, director Evan Carton received a phone call from a young woman who was weighing her offer of admission for graduate study at UT against options at other research universities. Sylvia Gale asked him about opportunities for graduate students to become involved in advancing the community engagement component of the HI’s stated mission. She was returning to school to pursue a Ph.D. in English, she said, but her professional objective was a career that combined traditional academic scholarship and college teaching with a leadership role in expanding the humanities’ access and activism in the public sphere.

Seven years later, Dr. Gale completed a doctoral thesis whose topic and title, “Resisting Functional-Critical Divides: Literacy Education at Moor’s Indian Charity School and Tuskegee Institute,” exemplified her synthetic intellectual and civic commitments. But her stellar graduate work with English and Rhetoric and Writing faculty comprised only a part of her distinguished graduate career at UT and of the professional development that led to her appointment in August as Associate Director of the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement at the University of Richmond.

For four years, from 2003 to 2007, Gale had a 20-hour per week graduate appointment coordinating the Humanities Institute’s community programs. In fact, she was instrumental in the conception and implementation of many of the Institute’s signature public humanities initiatives, including Writing Austin’s Lives, the Community Sabbatical Research Leave, and the Free Minds Project.

“When I went to Richmond for my interview,” Gale reported, “they saw that this would be central to me. The heart of [my] new position is connecting community partners with university partners, and that’s what I did at the HI.” In fact, Gale added, she knew she’d come to the right place when she discovered that her prospective boss not only owned the book Writing Austin’s Lives but carried around a copy in her car to show to people as an example of university-community cooperation.

Bonner Center Executive Director, Dr. Amy Howard, concurred that Gale’s preparation and achievement at the Humanities Institute set her apart from the other applicants in a strong national pool.

“Sylvia stood out as a candidate because of her deep and broad understanding of the importance of fostering sustained, respectful partnerships between universities and community partners. Her esteem for community partners as co-educators also maps onto the values of the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement. From her outstanding project management experience with the innovative Community Sabbatical Program to the creativity she demonstrated through her work on Writing Austin’s Lives, Sylvia is a proven leader in higher education civic engagement work.”

Published as a book by the Humanities Institute and the Austin History Center in 2004, Writing Austin’s Lives is a bilingual grassroots portrait of Austin through the eyes, experiences, and family histories of 125 out of the more than 800 Austinites who participated in a community life-writing project that the HI launched in 2003. Gale and Carton jointly edited the 400-page volume and collaboratively wrote the introduction. They collaborated again on the journal article “Toward the Practice of the Humanities,” which was published in the public policy journal The Good Society in 2005 and embraced as a leading brief and template for public scholarship—the union of serious intellectual endeavor with a commitment to community engagement and public consequence—by the national consortium Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life.

As a graduate student, Gale also designed and led Imagining America’s P.A.G.E. (Publicly Active Graduate Education) program and served as the first director of the Humanities Institute’s Free Minds Project, which, now entering its fourth year, has raised more than $100,000 in grant funding to help Austin-area adults living on low to moderate incomes fulfill their intellectual potential, “jumpstart” their college education, and increase their confidence and empowerment in every aspect of their lives. At Richmond, Gale will oversee a number of initiatives that bring the university and the city communities together to enhance the experiences and serve the needs of both.

Exhibiting a characteristically expansive sense of the curricular and of the possible, Gale remarks: “My time at the HI really cultivated my belief that administrative work can provide rich opportunities for curricular development. This is the work I want to do.”
Distinguished Visiting Lecture Series.

Four public lectures will examine this theme from the vantage points of poetry, drama, politics, and art history.

The first Distinguished Visiting Lecturer is Martin Espada, a poet and professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Professor Espada will read and comment upon the poems in his book, *The Republic of Poetry*. This 2006 collection was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Espada is a former tenant lawyer, and his poetry has strong political themes. His lecture is scheduled for the evening of October 15, 2009.

Dr. Richard Schechner will offer the second lecture in the series on November 13. A professor of performance studies at New York University, Schechner will discuss his production of *Dionysus in 69* during the tumultuous time of the late 1960s. The lecture will include selections from Brian de Palma’s film version of the production, and prepare audiences for the Rude Mechanicals’ December reprise of *Dionysus in 69* (see page 3).

Joining us in the spring are Professors Wendy Brown and Rosalyn Deutsche. A political and feminist theorist at the University of California, Berkeley, Wendy Brown most recently published *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Brown’s Distinguished Visiting Lecture, on February 24, 2010, will focus on the contemporary university in crisis. The Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice is sponsoring a second lecture by Professor Brown on February 25 entitled “Walled States, Waning Sovereignty.”

The final lecture in the series, by Professor Deutsche, will be on March 10, 2010. An art historian at Barnard College, Rosalyn Deutsche is especially well known for her book, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, which analyzes the social exclusions created by urban development projects. Her lecture will present her current research on representations of war from Hiroshima to Iraq.

The Humanities Institute is pleased to be able to bring these four scholars to campus as part of its ninth Distinguished Visiting Lecture Series. All lectures are free and open to the public, and followed by discussion.

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New Director

As associate director since 2006, Dr. Strong has worked with HI founder Dr. Evan Carton on all aspects of the Institute’s activities, with a special focus on developing campus and community partnerships.

Strong relishes the chance to continue and extend the work of the Institute—work made especially urgent, she feels, by economic conditions that can narrow discourses and deepen social divides. One of the great strengths of the Humanities Institute, Strong notes, is its capacity to “take on difficult dialogues and go beyond the model of ‘outreach’ to meaningfully engage diverse communities.” This approach will continue in 2009-10 through a series of “thinking in community” lectures and forums, the Community Sabbatical research leaves for leaders of area non-profits, and the Mayor’s Book Club, which the Institute co-sponsors with the Austin Public Library.

And for the second year, the Humanities Institute will lead the pathbreaking Difficult Dialogues Program, which engages UT undergraduates in informed and respectful conversations about controversial issues.

Strong, who has been at UT since 1993, continues to serve as an associate professor of anthropology and gender studies while she directs the Institute.

Evan Carton is returning to full-time teaching and research in the Department of English after serving as the HI director for eight years. He will continue to lend his energy and insight to the Institute as a member of the new Advisory Committee. As a result of Carton’s work, the Humanities Institute is known across the country for innovative programs that connect the university to various constituencies in the community. Strong and the other members of the Institute’s staff are committed to extending his legacy.

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PAUL AND MARY HO
DISTINGUISHED LECTURE
IN CHINA STUDIES

“NGO 2.0: An Experiment with Social Media in China,” Jing Wang, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Thursday, April 15, 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Wang is the S.C. Fang Professor of Chinese Language and Culture at MIT, where she has taught since 2001. Educated in Taiwan and the U.S., she earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

T: When did you first arrive?
K: What motivated your family to move?
T: Why are you even here?
K: How did you get here?
T: Do you have your papers?
K: Are you really an American?
T: Are you a terrorist?!
K: I'm American!
T: NO you’re not!!
K: Yes I am... I’ve been here all my life!!
T: You look Mexican!!
K: This used to be Mexico.
T: It's America NOW!
K: Well, what do I need to do be an American?
T: To be an American you...have to be... well... you know... white.
K: Oh, that makes a lot of sense! I guess you're not American either.
T: Yes I am. I was born here.
K: What about your family?
T: What about YOUR family?
T and K to Audience: What about YOUR families?

Thus begins the performance of the Humanities Institute’s Living Newspaper Summer Youth Performance Troupe, a group of 16 Austin-area middle and high school students. Troupe members spent five weeks researching, writing, rehearsing and, on August 6–8, performing theatre pieces inspired by the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum's exhibit, Forgotten Gateway: Coming to the U.S. through Galveston Island. Funded by a grant from the Webber Family Foundation, and supported by partnering institutions including The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, Theatre Action Project, and UT’s Performance as Public Practice Program, the Summer Troupe is an expansion of the academic year Living Newspapers Across the Disciplines Program, which has been a signature Humanities Institute initiative for the past three years.

Over the course of the summer, troupe members were treated to a personal tour through the exhibit by its curator, Dr. Suzanne Serif, and were introduced to the Benson Library’s collection on immigration-related materials by Benson staff Margo Gutierrez and Adrian Johnson. Additionally, troupe members learned script writing and voice and movement techniques through master classes with Nigel O’Hern and Julia Smith, and were provided with a historical overview of human rights by the Rapoport Center’s Jeremy Dean.

Summer Troupe staff members Rebecca Hewett, from the Performance as Public Practice Program, and Natalie Goodnow, from Theatre Action Project, as well as the Humanities Institute’s Tessa Farmer and Gretchen Abbott, instructed the students daily as they delved into America’s immigration history and crafted the scripts for their performances. Along the way, the students encountered difficult questions about race, xenophobia, and the process of creating a historical narrative. One student said, “Diversity is something I haven’t really experienced all that much, and I found it here, racially, intellectually, and culturally.” Troupe members were selected from a pool of 43 applicants, and were paid for their labor in the spirit of the original federal Works Progress Administration’s (WPA’s) Living Newspapers program, which provided opportunities for actors, directors, and theatre technicians during the Great Depression.

After successfully developing the summer and academic year Living Newspapers, the Humanities Institute is now turning over its stewardship of the program to the Performance as Public Practice Program in UT’s Department of Theatre and Dance. The Humanities Institute continues to be an active partner in this exciting endeavor.

One thing I learned during the Living Newspaper was that together, we can make a change in someone’s perspective. We can inform people about issues that are happening nowadays, so they can reflect upon it and do an effort to make the problem better. What I also learned is that people’s opinions and backgrounds influence things like plays in a very interesting way.

— Blanca Landin
by Evan Carton

Over the summer, many University of Texas faculty and students and local community members alike followed the contested Iranian presidential election and its troubling aftermath with heightened interest and concern as a result of the campus residency last spring of Dr. Shirin Ebadi, winner of a Nobel Peace Prize and Iran’s leading democracy activist and defender of the rights of women, children, and political dissidents.

Co-sponsored by the Humanities Institute and the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies, with generous assistance from the Rapoport Center for Human Rights, the LBJ Library and Museum, and President Powers, Dr. Ebadi and her exceptionally skilled colleague and translator, Dr. Banafsheh Keynoush, spent five packed days in Austin. The visit encompassed nine public events whose formats, venues, and audiences varied widely, in addition to several print and electronic media interviews and working meals. All told, nearly fourteen hundred people—including university academics, local women’s advocacy and social justice nonprofit workers, high school students, and Iranian émigrés or Central Texans of Iranian descent—attended Ebadi’s lectures, readings, classroom appearances, and roundtable discussions.

Dr. Ebadi was the second recipient of the C. L. and Henriette Cline Centennial Visiting Professorship in the Humanities, established by the Humanities Institute after it was awarded stewardship of the Cline endowment by former Liberal Arts dean Richard Lariviere. The first Cline residency was held by the late poet and performance artist Sekou Sundiata, who brought his America Project and multi-media production, the 51st dream state, to UT in 2007. Ebadi’s visit, like Sundiata’s, was profoundly successful in its advancement of the Institute’s broad mission to build and enrich intellectual community within, across, and beyond the University’s walls and in its fulfillment of the Cline Professorship’s design to engage a diverse cross-section of Austinites in the exploration of important contemporary ideas and issues through the work and the presence of a distinguished intellectual, artistic, or social actor on the world stage.

Early in 2009, I and the other organizers of Dr. Ebadi’s April residency wondered whether political restrictions on her travel or renewed threats to her safety might thwart her planned visit. Late last year, the storefront Center for the Defense of Human Rights that Ebadi maintains in Tehran was raided and closed by Iranian police, who seized Ebadi’s computer and confidential records and threatened to arrest her for tax evasion, although her legal representation of abuse victims and political prisoners in Iran is entirely pro bono.

Around the same time, authori-
ties stood by and watched mobs of young men vandalize her house and terrify her family with spray-painted epithets and chants of “death to the pen-pushing mercenary.” One popular smear against Ebadi was to charge her with support of Israel’s invasion of Gaza. Ironically, Ebadi’s scintillating and substantive dialogue on “U.S.-Iranian Relations” with several UT faculty experts on Middle East politics and cultures, hosted by the LBJ Library and Museum, featured her eloquent argument that Iranian international prestige in the Middle East is largely a function of its posture as the heroic antagonist to U.S. policies which, beneath a flimsy pretense of even-handedness, serve the interests of continued Israeli domination over the lives and lands of Palestinians—policies that Americans could change and that, unchanged, pose a greater threat to peace and stability in the region than Iranian nuclear power.

Another campus highlight of Ebadi’s visit was the Rapoport Center panel on “Law, Locality, and International Human Rights,” which offered a rich comparative analysis of human rights approaches and challenges in Latin America, South Asia, North and sub-Saharan Africa, and the U.S., as well as in the Middle East. More moving, however, than any of the academic forums were two community events: a public discussion and signing of Ebadi’s memoir, *Iran Awakening: One Woman’s Journey to Reclaim her Life and Country*, at BookPeople, and an informal talk and Q&A about the youth movement and the values of young people in Iran and the U.S. that drew 400 students, teachers, and parents at St. Stephen’s Episcopal School.

At BookPeople, my function was to assist with crowd control, but I must confess that I was soon caught up in the emotion of the scores of Iranian Americans of all ages who lined up excitedly for a brief word with Ebadi or to have her sign their books or shirts or just to touch her or hug her, and occasionally to break down as they asked her to help a friend or family member in trouble back home. Austinite Nastaran Kherad, herself the author of a powerful memoir—In the House of My Bibi—about her childhood and imprisonment in revolutionary Iran, summarized the general community sentiment:

“As an Iranian woman I am very proud of Shirin Ebadi. In the past three decades, thousands of Iranian women have been wounded, imprisoned, and executed for having been brave enough to demand their legal and social rights. For me, Shirin Ebadi is the very symbol of this social and political struggle for Iranian women.”

In the face of continuing harassment, Ebadi exudes not only determination but, even more impressively, optimism and an easy sense of humor. In the middle of her discussion of the attitudes and aspirations of Iranian youth, before a spellbound audience at St. Stephen’s, a cell phone began to ring loudly. Everyone shifted uneasily, but no one silenced the phone, until Ebadi paused, stepped off the podium, retrieved her purse on a chair in the front row, held the offending phone aloft, and gave it two or three playful smacks, while pronouncing in English, “bad phone; bad, bad phone.” And on our drive out to the school, she asked me to retract my Mitsubishi’s ragtop so that she could experience the Central Texas Hill Country in her first-ever convertible ride.

Dr. Ebadi was speaking and participating in U.S. human rights meetings in Europe this summer when the election protests erupted in Iran. Many of her friends and colleagues have been arrested, and Ebadi has been warned not to return, but she has not been silenced.

“My request,” Ebadi told a Reuters correspondent in Geneva, “would be that in order that things calm down, these elections should be declared null and void and new elections should be organized under the supervision of international institutions.”

Asking about her own safety and plans, she replied. “Tehran is my home, I will go back.”
OUR MISSION
To build civic and intellectual community—within, across, and beyond the University’s walls—by bringing people together to explore issues and ideas that matter.

PUBLIC EVENTS
Thursday, Oct. 22, “Many Voices, Many Stories: Dialogues About Immigration in a Public Museum,” Suzanne Seriff (p. 5)
Wednesday, March 10, 2010: “Hiroshima after Iraq: A Study in Art and War,” Rosalyn Deutsche (p. 1)
Thursday, April 15, 2010: “NGO 2.0: An Experiment with Social Media in China,” Jing Wang (p. 8)