



The Power of the Humanities: Why They Matter

**Vermont Humanities Council
2011 Annual Fall Conference**

November 11 and 12

Begins Friday afternoon and runs through Saturday
Stowe/Flake Mountain Resort and Spa, Stowe, Vermont



The Power of the Humanities: Why They Matter

Vermont Humanities Council 2011 Fall Conference
Friday and Saturday • November 11–12, 2011

The humanities “reveal how people have tried to make moral, spiritual, and intellectual sense of a world in which irrationality, despair, loneliness, and death are as conspicuous as birth, friendship, hope, and reason.”*

According to the Rockefeller Commission on the Humanities (1980), the humanities are how we come to terms with those poles of the human experience, and how we reconcile our better angels with our fears and failures. And yet increasingly the humanities are under attack, in part because of the difficulty in measuring their utility in economic terms.

At a time in which the value of the humanities is not broadly understood, and even called into question, we invite you to join us in exploring and experiencing the power of literature, history, an understanding of the arts, and the study of religion and the other humanities disciplines. In the process, we'll seek a keener understanding of how and why the humanities matter — to both individuals and society.

On Friday afternoon, James Cuno, president and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust, will speak on the role of art museums in preserving and transmitting culture.

Friday evening, at the Stowe Community Church, Richard Kogan, MD will offer a one-of-a-kind lecture-performance linking stories of Beethoven's life with exquisitely performed excerpts from Beethoven's work.

Saturday morning, Dr. John Stauffer, chair of the Program in the History of American Civilization at Harvard University, will draw on his research on the American Civil War and American racial history to illustrate the significance of the study of history.

Diana Eck, professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University, will give the final plenary, speaking about the significance and the challenges of understanding religious beliefs and practices across cultures.

Breakout sessions will offer a chance to explore further the scholarship of the three plenary speakers. Other breakouts include a discussion on The Power of Literature to Help and To Heal with VHC scholar Suzanne Brown; two discussions with Dr. Elizabeth Lynn — Civic Reflection through Reading and The Public Humanities in America: A Movement and its Meanings; Welfare Brat: Literature Changing Lives with memoirist Dr. Mary Childers; and a conversation about the significance of the humanities in one's own life with VHC Executive Director Peter Gilbert.

* The Humanities in American Life,
Report of the Commission of the Humanities (1980)

Key Speakers



James Cuno

President and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust, Los Angeles

Formerly the president and director of the Art Institute of Chicago, Cuno has led the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and the Harvard University Art Museum. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and has written and lectured on topics ranging from eighteenth-century French caricature to contemporary American art, with a recent emphasis on the role of art museums in civic life.



Diana Eck

Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies, Harvard University

At Harvard, Eck is a member of the faculty of Divinity and Master of Lowell House. Since 1991, she has headed the Pluralism Project, which examines the issues of religious pluralism and American civil society. Her work focuses on India and America. She is interested in the challenges of religious pluralism in a multi-religious society.



Richard Kogan

Psychiatrist and Acclaimed Concert Pianist

Kogan is co-director of Weill Cornell College's Human Sexuality Program and co-chairman of the Weill Cornell Music/Medicine Initiative. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music Pre-College, Harvard College, and Harvard Medical School. Kogan also has a private practice in psychiatry in New York City.



John Stauffer

Professor of the History of American Civilization, Harvard University

Stauffer is chair of the History of American Civilization program at Harvard and a professor of English and African and African American Studies. He is a leading authority on antislavery, social protest movements, and interracial friendship, and an award-winning author of books and magazine and journal articles.



Power of the Humanities VHC Fall Conference – Schedule

Friday, November 11

1:30 PM – 4:15 PM **Registration desk open.** *Room: Gallery*

4:15 PM – 5:30 PM **Museums Matter: Museums in the Post-Colonial Present.** In 2009, the world's 30 most popular exhibitions attracted more than 12 million people and the top 100 North American museums had a total attendance of 42 million. James Cuno, president and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust, will explore the popularity of art museums. Why do so many people of increasingly diverse backgrounds come to art museums? And what special role can encyclopedic art museums—those with representative examples of the world's many cultures in their collections—play today? *Room: Stowe*

5:30 PM – 7:15 PM **Registration desk open.** *Room: Gallery*

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM **Beethoven's Deafness: Psychological Crisis and Artistic Triumph.** Concert pianist and psychiatrist Richard Kogan will present a lecture and performance that explores the power of music to help heal artist and audience alike, and considers the influence of psychological factors on Beethoven's creative output. **Note offsite location: Stowe Community Church**

Saturday, November 12

7:15 AM – 8:30 AM **Registration desk open.** *Room: Gallery*

Continental breakfast. *Room: Collins*

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM **Welcome.** Peter Gilbert, VHC executive director; James Wilbur, VHC board chair; presentation of 2011 Victor R. Swenson Humanities Educator Award. *Room: Pinnacle*

9:00 AM – 10:15 AM **Why History Matters.** History matters to individuals, and it matters to society. Drawing on examples including Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, as well as twentieth- and twenty-first century figures, Professor John Stauffer will connect the importance of history to the American dilemma of race and democracy, and include some cautionary tales about what happens when people and societies ignore their past. *Room: Pinnacle*

10:15 AM – 10:45 AM **Break with coffee and tea.** *Room: Collins*

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM **Breakout sessions (see right)**

12:00 PM – 1:15 PM **Buffet luncheon.** *Room: Pinnacle*

1:15 PM – 2:30 PM **The Power of Religion: Practical Humanities in a World of Difference.** Diana Eck discusses how religious communities and religious faith are powerful forces in the world today. What do we need to know about the energies of religion as religious worlds collide, converge, and change? As America becomes more religiously diverse, what are the practical lessons of religious pluralism necessary for leadership and citizenship? *Room: Pinnacle*

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM **Break with beverages.** *Room: Atrium*

3:00 PM – 4:15 PM **Breakout sessions (see right)**

Conference Details

Payment, registration, and cancellations: The \$99 (\$69 student) fee includes all conference programs, a packet of conference reading, continental breakfast, buffet lunch, and snacks. Martha Nussbaum's *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* is optional (\$16). Space is limited; registration is first-come, first-served. **Registration deadline: October 22;** after the deadline, registrations will be accepted as space is available. **Register online at vermonthumanities.org or by fax with a credit card 802.262.2620 or by check to Vermont Humanities Council, 11 Loomis Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05602.** One person per form. **Cancellations:** refund less \$25 fee until October 22; no refund after October 22. **Scholarships:** deadline is October 13. Apply online. **Friday night performance:** Tickets are available to non-conference attendees for \$18. **Other details:** Students and teachers are encouraged to attend; certification letters are available. Special pricing is available to groups affiliated with an institution such as a school. An on-site bookstore will be open Saturday. **Lodging:** Rooms at the StoweFlake are \$125 (plus tax) single or double on a first-come, first-served basis. For reservations, 800.253.2232 or stoweflake.com. Mention the conference to receive the conference rate (good November 11–12). **Contact:** 802.262.2626 x304 • acaterino@vermonthumanities.org • vermonthumanities.org

Power of the Humanities VHC Fall Conference – Breakout Sessions

Morning Session

Civic Reflection through Reading and Discussion.

Civic reflection is a simple activity in some ways: it involves a short text, a group of people, a circle of chairs, a little food, and a facilitator. But it is complex in other ways: it calls for careful thought, flexibility, creativity, and a willingness to think in new ways, wrestle with new issues, and interact with others differently. Dr. Lynn will lead participants in such a discussion and reflect on the importance and impact of civic reflection on an increasingly fractured society. **Led by:** *Dr. Elizabeth Lynn, founder of the Project on Civic Reflection*

How Primary Sources Reveal Why History Matters.

Developing his morning talk further, Professor Stauffer will examine several primary sources related to his current research—perhaps a photo, a short letter, and a song—that exemplify why history matters. **Led by:** *Dr. John Stauffer, Harvard University professor of English and African and African American Studies, and Chair of the History of American Civilization*

The Power of Literature to Help and to Heal. Using a short text by Dr. Arthur Kleinman, MD, in the morning and a short story by author Anne Brashler in the afternoon, Professor Brown will lead a reading and discussion session similar to those she leads as a scholar in VHC's Literature and Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care program. Through these reading and discussion sessions, participants will experience how literature acts as a catalyst to understanding the experiences of others, and facilitates both communication and healing. The Literature and Medicine program is in hospitals in Vermont and twenty-four other states. **Led by:** *Suzanne Brown, visiting assistant professor, Dartmouth College, editor of Echoes of War, an anthology published by the Maine Humanities Council for the Literature and Medicine program*

The Promise and Challenges of Art Museums in the Contemporary World. Following up on his Friday afternoon talk, James Cuno will discuss the opportunities and challenges faced by the great art museums of the world, and answer questions. **Led by:** *Dr. James Cuno, president and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust*

Welfare Brat: Literature Changing Lives. No book demonstrates better the power of literature to change lives than Mary Childers's childhood memoir, *Welfare Brat*, which gives an honest, often heartbreaking but hopeful account of her childhood

in the Bronx in the 1950s. By pursuing her dream of education, Childers rose out of multigenerational poverty to earn a PhD in literature; she now works as ombudsperson at Dartmouth College. For the last several years under the auspices of VHC, women served by social service providers in five different regions of the state have read and discussed the book and then met with the author to make the connections between their lives, the book, and each other. Dr. Childers will discuss both breaking out of poverty and writing this compelling book. **Led by:** *Dr. Mary Childers, author and Dartmouth College Ombudsperson. She has also taught English and Women's Studies at Dartmouth, Vanderbilt, and other colleges.*

Afternoon Session

The Power of Literature to Help and to Heal.

See description to left.

The Public Humanities in America: A Movement and Its Meanings. Recently humanities scholar and practitioner Elizabeth Lynn has been studying the development of the public humanities in America. She will speak about what the history of this unique movement suggests about the role of the humanities in a democracy. **Led by:** *Dr. Elizabeth Lynn, founder of the Project on Civic Reflection*

Religious Pluralism in America. Professor Eck will talk briefly about the Case Studies Initiative of the Pluralism Project and lead a discussion of a short case study to enable participants to enter into one of the dilemmas of "practical humanities" in today's society. **Led by:** *Dr. Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies, Harvard University*

Welfare Brat: Literature Changing Lives.

See description bottom left.

Why Do the Humanities Matter to You? What is your most powerful humanities experience? This discussion will consider whether one's experience of and appreciation for literature, history, art history, and other humanities disciplines has changed over one's life; whether older people experience the humanities more powerfully than others, and if so, why; and how the humanities can play a more central role in individuals' lives and in society. The conference text, Martha Nussbaum's *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* and the conference presentations will inform the discussion. **Led by:** *Peter Gilbert, VHC Executive Director*



VHC Fall Conference 2011 Registration Form ****Register online: vermonthumanities.org****

Conference Details:

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First name _____ Last name _____

Affiliation _____

Mailing address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ E-mail _____

First VHC conference? (check) Yes No I am a teacher and need a letter of participation.

Special needs? _____

CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

FRIDAY

4:15 PM – 5:30 PM: Museums Matter: Museums in the Post-Colonial Present (Check one)

I will attend I will not attend

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM: Beethoven's Deafness: Psychological Crisis and Artistic Triumph (Check one)

I will attend I will not attend

SATURDAY BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Morning: 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM, Rank preference, 1–5 (1 is first choice)

- _____ Civic Reflection through Reading and Discussion
- _____ How Primary Sources Reveal Why History Matters
- _____ The Power of Literature to Help and to Heal
- _____ The Promise and Challenge of Art Museums in the Contemporary World
- _____ Welfare Brat: Literature Changing Lives

Afternoon: 3:00 PM – 4:15 PM, Rank preference, 1–5 (1 is first choice)

- _____ The Power of Literature to Help and to Heal
- _____ The Public Humanities in America: A Movement and Its Meanings
- _____ Religious Pluralism in America
- _____ Welfare Brat: Literature Changing Lives
- _____ Why Do the Humanities Matter to You?

REGISTRATION FEES

\$99 registration (\$69 student)	\$	_____
\$16 <i>Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities</i>	\$	_____
\$18 Friday night performance; performance included in conference fee; tickets are available for the general public	\$	_____
Donation to the Vermont Humanities Council	\$	_____
TOTAL DUE	\$	_____

Check enclosed for \$ _____ OR charge to (check) Visa MC

Card no. _____ Exp. date _____

Signature _____