

A vibrant cosmic background featuring a large, glowing blue nebula in the foreground, with various other colorful nebulae and stars scattered across the dark space.

# Calgary Institute for the Humanities

**Annual Report**  
**2024-25**



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

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# Director's Report

We have been hearing for some years now about a crisis in the humanities. There has been much talk, for example, about the economic value of arts degrees and the prospects for graduates from BA programs. But in fact studies in both the US and Canada have shown that humanities graduates do very well in terms of employment and moreover, they report higher job satisfaction than graduates from many other fields. Equally importantly, we have always seen at the CIH that there is a real interest in the humanities both inside and outside the university. And further, there is a wide-spread appreciation for humanities perspectives on topics such as gene editing, energy transition, and space exploration: topics which might seem beyond the purview of a traditional humanities approach and all of which were addressed last year at the CIH. I would argue that the humanities perspective is, if anything, even more vital in the dawning age of AI, where too many people are ignoring the “artificial” in “artificial intelligence”: the humanities teach us to think and to read critically, activities which cannot be outsourced to algorithms that offer simulations of thought rather than real thinking.

As you'll see in the pages that follow, in the past year we've hosted a lively series of events on topics ranging from the Russian war on Ukraine to the ethics of designer babies, and attendance at our talks is as high as it's ever been. Our annual community seminar, on Re-Imagining Death, was our best-attended in years, with a large waiting list of people who unfortunately had to be turned away.

As usual, the CIH hosted an exceptional group of scholars from across the humanities as resident fellows, as well as two advanced doctoral candidates. This year's lunch-time discussions were enriched by the presence of artists-in-residence, Mia + Eric, who will be with the CIH for a three-year pilot project with the support of the Azrieli Accelerator program.



Our Public Humanities program welcomed three doctoral students who undertook research for three community organizations: the Confluence Centre, the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society and Simon House. And our interdisciplinary working groups continue to undertake vital exploratory conversations.

Our public lecture series started the year off with a deeply learned and highly accessible talk on Russian homophobia and the assault on Ukraine, by Oxford professor Dr. Dan Healey. The second annual Egmont Lee Founders' Lecture was given by Dr. Mushegh Asatryan, who gave a fascinating account of the culture of debate in the Abbasid Empire. For our Naomi Lacey Memorial Lecture, film scholar Dr. Lee Carruthers spoke about late and last works to a lively group of students, faculty and community members. The fifth annual Applied Ethics lecture was given by Dr. Françoise Baylis, the incoming president of the Royal Society of Canada, who addressed the ethics of editing the human genome. And our 44<sup>th</sup> annual

community seminar looked at how conceptions of death have changed in relation to the decline of organized religion, the rise of environmentalism, and the appearance of social media. We had three excellent speakers along with a guest artist/curator, and a special musical performance via ChamberFest West.

Another highlight of the year was the publication of the fourth volume in our series with UCalgary Press, *Mythologies of Outer Space*. This beautifully produced book was based on presentations from our 41<sup>st</sup> community seminar, along with new contributions from Calgary scholars and artists, and an afterward by astronaut and former UCalgary chancellor Dr. Robert Thirsk, who discussed the importance of humanities perspectives on space exploration. The book's appearance received lots of press attention, and we were delighted to give a presentation to a lively crowd of over two hundred people at one of the Rothney Astrophysical Observatory's space nights, featuring some of the contributors to the book.

While the talk of a crisis in the humanities cannot be ignored, there is ample evidence that it is largely based on misperceptions. The humanities are vital, the perspectives they offer are crucial, and at least in our experience, they are much valued by the community at large. I hope that you'll enjoy reading about our activities in the pages that follow, and that you'll find the time to join in our conversations in the coming year.

**Jim Ellis**  
Professor, Department of English

# Resident Fellows

Since 1977, the Institute has offered Resident Fellowships to faculty members at the University of Calgary. Awards are given to support specific research projects and provide the recipient with release from a portion of their teaching obligations. Without such leave time, the scholarly output that is crucial to a university's mandate would be substantially reduced.



## Lee Carruthers

Naomi Lacey Resident Fellow  
Associate Professor of Film  
Department of Communication, Media and Film

### **Cinematic Late Style: Last Works and Late Culture**

Filmmakers and scholars have suggested that cinema may be in a waning phase of development. This is a stark forecast for the medium and a significant one for its creative practitioners; whether for a mature director, or in terms of the medium's evolution, one wonders how the work is transformed by the knowledge that it may be a final creative effort. In response, Dr. Carruthers' research contemplates cinema in its late phase, highlighting the distinctive features of late works and examining the relationship between the late films of an individual artist and those produced during a late cultural phase. Ultimately, this research investigates what late and last works mean to us and to the filmmakers who have created them, during a period of profound change for cinema.



## Anuradha Gobin

CIH Resident Fellow  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Department of Art and Art History

### **Resistance Dance: Dolls, Dioramas and the Dutch Atlantic**

This project foregrounds new types of knowledge that can be gleaned from objects often regarded as lacking scholarly merit: early modern doll houses and dioramas. Placing select doll houses and dioramas in conversation with more traditionally studied media such as paintings facilitates an expanded understanding of the lived experiences of the enslaved who toiled on Dutch-owned Atlantic plantations. To structure this analysis, dance and the role of the senses are used as the guiding theme. Dance practices were one of the few remaining links to African traditions and can be regarded as a rare display of bodily autonomy for enslaved men and women working on plantations. Ultimately, this project contributes to calls for decolonising by demonstrating the importance of the senses to retrieve knowledge about the realities of groups who often left little physical traces such as material culture or texts in the archives.



### Janna Klostermann

CIH Resident Fellow  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology

#### **Reimagining Meanings and Expectations around Gendered Care Work in Aging Communities: What Can We Learn at the Limits?**

What kinds of care stories resist and recast the inequitable histories, relations and meanings that underpin late life care in Canada? While a range of scholarship examines everyday work and organizational conditions in long-term residential care, to date, few studies have considered how meanings and expectations around gendered care work are actively being rethought and renegotiated, including through expressions of agency and resistance. Responding to this need, this project mobilizes feminist rhetorical and arts-based approaches (involving storytelling workshops and participatory community events) to spark new conversations about care ethics in aging communities. The aim is to learn from the insights of a feminized and racialized workforce, while uncovering and rethinking moral, relational and philosophical complexities.



### Anna Veprinska

Wayne O. McCready Emerging Fellow  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English

#### **Listening as Pain and Necessity: Ear, Unfolding**

Dr. Veprinska's book of poems traces an autotheoretical tension between her reduced tolerance to sound and her accessibility-driven reliance on listening. Exposure to an acoustically traumatic event, which has triggered a sensitivity to noise pollution, has led to hyperacusis, a condition resulting in pain from everyday sounds. Meanwhile, an eye condition has led her to seek auditory accommodations, including structuring an oral history research project around her accessibility needs. With the improvement of text-to-speech software and the unprecedented rise of audiobooks, listening has become the method through which she accesses literary and cultural spaces and performs academic work. Drawing on the one hand from her auditory pain experiences and on the other from her oral history research and audio learning, her book of poems asks what happens when one both has an intolerance to and a reliance on sound, probing the noise pollution health crisis and our collective acoustic futures.



# Graduate Student Fellows

This year we were able to support a second Graduate Student Fellow, in addition to the Frances Spratt Graduate Student Fellowship which continues the tradition of supporting a PhD candidate who contributes to the public good by promoting the core values of the humanities and building bridges of learning to the broader community.



## Jamie Michaels

Frances Spratt Graduate Student Fellow  
PhD Candidate  
Department of English

### **Armageddon: A Comic Book History of the Nationalisms That Made the Modern Middle East**

Jews and Arabs have historically enjoyed generally positive relations; however, the last hundred years have been marred by seemingly intractable violence between Jewish and Arab nationalists. Jamie Michaels' work focuses on how art and literature might help Israelis and Palestinians to understand each other's national narratives. He is particularly interested in how popular history can be re-taught and re-imagined. His research-creation dissertation is a graphic novel that traces the emergence of Jewish and Arab nationalisms. The story takes place against the backdrop of the First World War, a conflict that saw Jews and Arabs fighting as military allies. By showcasing both Jewish and Arab perspectives, this graphic novel will enable the sharing of national stories between Israelis and Palestinians in new and surprising ways.



## Amanda Foote

Graduate Student Fellow  
PhD Candidate in Anthropology  
Department of Anthropology and Archaeology

### **Dagugun Woakide Akide Hnebigan Echin Bathtabi (Studying Museums in a Good Way)**

Museums are important sites of representation where issues of identity, history, culture and value are built and entrenched. Yet museums have traditionally been operated by an elite community of scholars, who do not represent the diverse cultures that are put on display. Indigenous people have been diligent advocates in seeking greater control of and access to their cultural belongings. Much scholarship exists on the criticality of this work for Indigenous communities, yet museums still grapple to accommodate notions of ownership and care from outside western norms. Working in the museum field Amanda Foote has learned much about nuanced challenges in supporting Indigenous people towards greater access and control of their cultural belongings. This research furthers work that she has been doing to steward access and control for the Îlethka Nation and asks: how have formal structures impacted Indigenous access to and control of cultural belongings in museums and collections?

# Artists-in-Residence

**This year the CIH introduced a new Artist-in-Residence program. The term for this position is 3 years. In addition to financial support, the CIH also provides work space and facilitates access to different campus resources, enabling the artists to form rewarding relationships with faculty, researchers and students.**



This year we were thrilled to welcome Mia Rushton and Eric Moschopedis (otherwise known as Mia + Eric) as our inaugural artists-in-residence at the CIH. For more than fifteen years, Mia + Eric have presented public projects and exhibitions across Europe and North America on the theme of interspecies relationships, biodiversity and place-based knowledge. Their project *Gone Today, Here Tomorrow*, which involved returning native plant species to a historical site in Calgary's city centre, was featured in the CIH's book *Intertwined Histories: Plants in their Social Contexts* (2019).

During their three-year fellowship, Mia + Eric will develop a new project on the University of Calgary campus, using the CIH as their base. This project — entitled *Brains, Strains, and Other Domains: Neurodiversity in Nature* — examines the relationship between neurodiversity and biodiversity. Weaving together ideas from Critical Animal Studies, Disability Studies, Philosophy, Ecology and Neuroscience, the artist duo will investigate how neurotypical norms shape dominant narratives about nature and consider what alternatives can be imagined in their place.

The project is premised in part on the parallels between ableist and anthropocentric perspectives. In both cases, animals and people with disabilities are construed as deficient because their ways of thinking, processing and experiencing their world diverge from normative standards. Prompted by their own lived experience, Mia + Eric will explore how neurodivergence might produce different relationships to nature. Ultimately, this project will enhance our understanding of both neurodiversity and the more-than-human world.

In addition to support from the CIH, this residency is funded in part by the Azrieli Accelerator, a University of Calgary program dedicated to advancing research that improves the lives of people with neurodevelopmental conditions. Through this project, Mia + Eric will develop strong collaborations across campus. They will also demonstrate the value of applying artistic perspectives to subjects that are traditionally considered to be the preserve of science.

# Interdisciplinary Working Groups

**The CIH Interdisciplinary Working Groups bring together expertise from different disciplines to produce groundbreaking research. They are convened by distinguished researchers and graduate students and the work of these groups has frequently received recognition through their impressive track record with SSHRC grant applications, peer-reviewed publications, international collaborations and community outreach.**

## Working Group on Ethics and Politics of Narratives

Narratives shape personal identities, collective experiences and social movements. At the same time, narratives can be dangerous — blurring fiction and reality, fostering fanaticism and potentially restricting personal autonomy by reinforcing established conventions. In multicultural societies, shared myths may exclude certain groups, while emerging technologies further complicate the situation as stories are distorted or erased through artificial intelligence. This working group brings together scholars from different disciplines to explore narrative's many dimensions. Their long-term goal is to establish a transdisciplinary network based in Western Canada that will apply insights from narrative scholarship to address regional challenges such as energy transitions, reconciliation and sustaining multicultural identities. In 2024-25, the group convened seven meetings, attended by faculty and students from philosophy, political science, English and the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures. The group also hosted four guest speakers, whose talks doubled as guest lectures in a graduate seminar on narrative taught by co-convenor Agnes Tam.

## Food Studies Interdisciplinary Research Group

Now in its sixth year, the Food Studies Interdisciplinary Research Group brings together scholars, activists and community leaders. In their lecture series and monthly meetings, the group addresses key themes such as climate and food security, inclusive urban food networks, regenerative local food production, Indigenous ecological knowledge and the gender gap in agriculture. This year, in addition to hosting academic speakers from as far afield as Brazil and the United Kingdom, the Food Studies Group also organized a panel discussion on food security in Calgary featuring Syma Habib (Food Resilience Specialist, City of Calgary), Heather Ramshaw (Food Hub Coordinator, University of Calgary) and Dennis Scanlan (Founder, SunnyCider).

## Holocaust Memory Working Group

Archaeological excavations at the former forced labor camp, Allach, in Munich in 2017 uncovered human remains, reminding us of the site's complex history as a wartime labor camp and postwar Displaced Persons camp. Today, the community remains marginalized

within the modern city of Munich and their efforts to preserve the surviving stone barracks for educational and social engagement have been unsuccessful. The site's material traces and disagreements about how to interpret them are indicative of ongoing struggles around memory, heritage, trauma and displacement. This working group brings together scholars from diverse fields — including Holocaust and genocide studies, anthropology, archaeology, history, education, fine arts and computer sciences — to develop initiatives such as heritage conservation, digital reconstructions, exhibitions, storytelling and educational programming.

## Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies Skills (LAMEMS) Working Group

LAMEMS is a graduate student-led group dedicated to skills development. Bringing together researchers from different disciplines and departments, LAMEMS provides a strong foundation that enables current and future students to pursue cutting-edge research. In their monthly meetings, LAMEMS offers training in essential research skills, including numismatics (the study of coins), palaeography (the ability to decipher and date historical manuscripts), medieval book production and the use of diplomatic sources. In 2025, LAMEMS also invited historian Dr. Bonnie Effros (University of British Columbia) to present her research on the study of early medieval burial grounds. As an expert on the history of archaeological practice, Dr. Effros delivered a talk on changing assumptions about gendered burial rituals and the impact of double-blind osteological studies and DNA studies of the dead; she then led a graduate workshop on the themes and methods used in her research.

## Performance and Business Research Working Group (PBRWG)

The PBRWG explores business practice and communications through the lens of performance theory. Now in its sixth year, the working group has established new lines of communication between business and performance studies, advocating for a broader conceptualization of performance as it manifests across business contexts. This year, the working group explored the theme of Performance and the Creative Economy. Over the course of the year, they hosted three works-in-progress sessions to provide feedback and support to members as they developed conference papers, dissertation chapters,

articles and grant applications. The group also hosted two larger events targeted at a wider audience. This year, the working group hosted two events on Performance and the Creative Economy, one featuring scholars from business and performance studies, the second focusing on practitioners. Their fall event, titled *The Price of Creativity: Power, Productivity, and Value in Cultural Industries*, featured guests Michael McKinnie (Professor of Theatre, Queen Mary University of London) and Eleonora Belfiore (Professor of Place, Space and Creative Economies, Research Centre for Creative Economies) for a discussion facilitated by Sarah Saddler (Assistant Professor of Theatre, Baruch College CUNY). Their winter event, titled *I Learned it on YouTube: Performance and Educational Content Creation*, featured guest panelists LiWen Ang of Hips+Heels, Tatiana Rodríguez Leal of Good Life Toolkit and Frank Stajano of Frank Stajano Explains for a discussion facilitated by Joy Palacios.

## Transdisciplinary Dialogues and Encounters for Climate Change Solutions: Pluralizing Knowledge in Political Ecology

In response to the escalating climate crisis — marked by extreme weather events, wildfires and biodiversity loss — this interdisciplinary working group examines the relationship between decarbonization, conservation and environmental justice. Recognizing the colonial roots of dominant sustainability narratives and the expansion of capital into conservation spaces, the group investigates how these frameworks affect local communities across Canada, Colombia, Bangladesh, Peru and India. Through political ecology, they question whose interests are served by prevailing policies and seek equitable, transformative solutions. Committed to decolonizing socio-environmental research, their goal is to create an inclusive forum for diverse voices and knowledge systems. In 2025, the group organized a one-day event entitled *Climate, Conservation and Community: A Transdisciplinary Political Ecology Dialogue*. Supported by the CIH, GSA Quality Money and an Indigenous Engagement Grant from the Faculty of Arts, the event drew over fifty registrants from diverse sectors, including academia, industry, government, non-profits, think tanks and the public. Participating institutions included the Calgary Climate Hub, Calgary Zoo and the Pembina Institute.



## Translation Studies Working Group

Translation studies is inherently interdisciplinary, encompassing philology, linguistics, literary studies, history, philosophy, semiotics and cultural studies. This group, now in its fifth year, unites colleagues from different departments to discuss the theory and practice of translation. In 2024-25, the group formed a new international partnership with Translation through Time, a working group comprised of like-minded scholars from Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK. This new partnership resulted in two international workshops. First, with the support of funds from a SSHRC Connection Grant, the Language Research Centre and the CIH, the group hosted its new European partners for a two-day workshop at the University of Calgary

in October 2024. The topic was Translators' [In]visibilities and the focus was on the less well studied pre-modern period. A highlight of the workshop was the participation of UCalgary students at all levels. The workshop was so productive, it immediately led to a return invitation to Antwerp in June 2025, where the focus was on translators' uses of annotations. Three of the core members of the Calgary group were able to participate and again had an enormously rich discussion. The trip to Antwerp included a half-day session working on a large network grant offered by the Flanders Research Council, which, should it be successful, will provide valuable opportunities not just for further collaboration but also for students from both teams.

# Public Humanities Fellows

This annual program partners community organisations with highly skilled doctoral students in the Humanities.



## Setareh Ezzatabadi

PhD Student  
Department of Philosophy

Setareh was awarded a fellowship with Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) for the placement opportunity Representation and Cultural Responsiveness.

CCIS is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping immigrants and refugees settle in Calgary and Southern Alberta. While at CCIS, Setareh will apply her research and analytical skills to determine how to embed cultural safety in the organization's policies, practices and staffing. Specifically, Setareh has been developing content for a workshop focused on promoting LGBTQ inclusion at CCIS. She is also preparing a lesson plan for a Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) course. This work will contribute to CCIS's mission to create inclusive, welcoming spaces free from racism and discrimination, ensuring that everyone feels secure accessing vital services.



## Narges (Lel) Khalesimoghaddam Ghaen

PhD Student  
Department of Anthropology and Archaeology

Lel was awarded a fellowship with Simon House Recovery Centre (SHRC) for the project Leveraging Art Therapy and Indigenous Wisdom in Addiction Recovery.

At SHRC, Lel will apply her research skills to help design and implement a new Therapeutic Arts Program. By studying existing art therapy practices, especially those focused on Indigenous Art, Lel will determine to what extent and in what ways these practices can support recovery. Working alongside the counseling team and Indigenous liaison, Lel will then help develop a framework for the future Therapeutic Arts Program. Through this placement, Lel will contribute to SHRC's ongoing efforts to foster cultural awareness and inclusivity in its treatment approaches.



Photo: Exterior of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society offices. Sculpture by Chaka Chikodzi.



## Andrew Goodwin

PhD Student  
Department of History

Andrew was awarded a fellowship with The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland for the placement opportunity Creative Experience, Exhibition & Program R&D.

The Confluence is a cultural center and National Historic Site committed to sharing the diverse histories of Treaty 7 territory. Drawing on his expertise in archival and historical research, Andrew will contribute to new exhibitions that illuminate the region's complex past. His research on the Hunt House and the Métis Cabin — two of Calgary's oldest buildings — will support Métis interpreters in leading guided tours. Through this placement, Andrew will acquire valuable experience in community engagement and public outreach.



# The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual CIH LGBTQ2S+ Lecture

## Ukraine, Russia and the Struggle for LGBTQ Freedom

This year, we had the honour of hosting historian Dr. Dan Healey, PhD, at the Calgary Central Library on Sept. 4, 2024, for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual LGBTQ2S+ Lecture, Ukraine, Russia and the Struggle for LGBTQ Freedom. Dr. Healey, Professor of Modern Russian History at the University of Oxford, has published widely on gender and sexuality in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. His key publications on the subject include *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago, 2001), *Bolshevik Sexual Forensics: Diagnosing Disorder in the Clinic and Courtroom, 1917-1939* (DeKalb, 2009) and *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi* (London, 2017).

Dr. Healey's lecture addressed the ongoing war in Ukraine and its impact on LGBTQ communities in the region. After a broad survey of homophobia in twentieth-century Russia, Healey explained how Putin weaponized this ideology on coming to power. First, he used it to garner domestic support by presenting himself as a defender of traditional values against Western influence. Then, it served him as a diplomatic tool to strengthen ties with autocratic states and conservative movements worldwide.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the LGBTQ community in Russia has faced increased persecution. A 2022 decree classified "non-traditional sexual relations" as a security threat. In response, increasing numbers of

Russian lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people have been applying for asylum in the West.

In Ukraine, the war has had a very different effect. After the Soviet Union collapsed, emerging civil rights movements faced outspoken resistance from conservative forces, including the Orthodox Church. Since then, progress has been made as part of EU integration, as political leaders of governing parties have been increasingly incentivized to recognize LGBTQ rights. The full-scale Russian invasion, however, has dramatically accelerated this process.

First, the invasion has significantly raised the stakes for queer activists, because Russian occupiers are directly targeting the queer community. Queer men and women have reported humiliation, beating, detentions and torture at the hands of Russian soldiers. In response, activists and prosecutors have been gathering evidence of homophobic war crimes for submission to the International Criminal Court.

At the same time, the Russian invasion has encouraged a rejection of "Russian world" ideology among the broader population. In this context, LGBTQ activism has achieved unprecedented visibility and traction, including within the Ukrainian military. For queer military personnel, the affirmation of self-determination and democratic rule-of-law is also an affirmation of LGBTQ rights.

We are grateful to University of Calgary Alumni, the Calgary Public Library, the Osten-Victor Fund at the Calgary Foundation and community donors for making this event possible. This annual lecture provides a space for in-depth reflection on LGBTQ2S+ history and culture, demonstrating the value of academic and humanistic perspectives on this topic. As such, it provides an important complement to other Pride Week events focused on expression, celebration and advocacy.



Photo: Dan Healey.

# Calgary Atlas Project

The Calgary Atlas Project has produced nine completed maps. Each map illustrates forgotten or overlooked aspects of local history. In addition to the illuminating stories they tell, these maps are also striking works of art that help us to see the city in new ways.

Seven new maps are scheduled for release as part of our fiftieth anniversary celebrations. These upcoming maps will explore diverse aspects of the city's history, highlighting the people and technologies that have made modern Calgary.

Stories from these forthcoming maps are already being shared at public events. Director Jim Ellis, University of Calgary undergraduate Shuyao (Katie) Qin and University of Calgary historian Dr. Nancy Janovicek, PhD, discussed “Forest Lawn Foodways” at a meeting of the University of Calgary Retirees Association (UNRA) on April 9, 2025. Richard de Boer and Carol Kehoe, the creators of “Calgary’s Abandoned Routes,” presented their research at Calgary Central Library on July 25, 2025 as part of Chinook Country Historical Society’s Historic Calgary Week 2025. We look forward to many more community events in the upcoming year.

## Upcoming Maps

**Calgary's Black History** highlights the impact of Black Calgarians from the city's earliest days, identifying the many businesses, cultural institutions and social groups that they have established over the years.

**Forest Lawn Foodways** examines how waves of immigration have shaped Calgary, using the ethnic grocery stores and restaurants along International Avenue to illustrate their legacy.

**The Calgary 80s Music Scene** features the clubs and underground, after-hours venues that supported a colorful assortment of rock, punk and no wave bands.

**The Latin American Mental Map** is based on interviews with Calgarians of Latin American descent and identifies meaningful sites across the city using a qualitative, community-driven approach.

**Calgary's Alternative Energy History** shows how mills, dams, steam power, electrification and animal labour powered the early city, reminding us that Calgary was not built on oil and gas alone.

**Calgary's Abandoned Routes** traces lost transportation networks such as streetcars and ferries, showing how early residents navigated the city before the Deerfoot Trail and the +15-system redefined how we travel.

**Chinese Benevolent Associations** are the focus of this map, which explores the actors and institutions that helped sustain the Chinese community in Calgary.



# 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Forum: Re-Imagining Death



Since 1981, the CIH Annual Community Forum has brought scholars and community members together to discuss pressing issues facing contemporary society. Each year, the CIH selects a theme relevant to Calgarians and invites distinguished researchers to share their insights on it in a day-long conversation with community members. The 44<sup>th</sup> Community Forum, held on May 9, 2025, explored a topic that humans have always grappled with, namely, death.

Although death is universal, the meaning and experience of death varies widely depending on time and place. One classic account of how western society has engaged with death posits a major shift from the premodern era, where death was a familiar presence, to the modern era, when death was removed from public view. More recently, scholars have argued that we have entered a new era, in which death has become a spectacle.

This year's seminar featured four guest speakers who explored how the experience and representation of death has changed because of new technologies (the internet, AI, holograms), societal shifts (the rise of environmentalism, the decline of religion) and other developments. What new experiences of death have emerged? What are the ethical challenges that accompany them?

Our first speaker was Dr. John Troyer, PhD, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Policy Sciences at the University of Bath and author of *Technologies of the Human Corpse* (2021). In his research, Troyer traces changing ideas and practices relating to human remains in the realms of science,

technology, bioethics and law. Troyer's contribution placed the key questions of the seminar in historical context. In the nineteenth century, new technologies such as embalming and photography promised unprecedented control over death and the dead body. Across the twentieth century, new "death prevention technologies" continued to emerge. Despite these innovations, Troyer concluded that death always resists our attempts to rationalize and control it.

The second presentation of the day was delivered by Dr. Alexis Elder, PhD, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Minnesota Duluth. Elder explained how classical Chinese philosophy can help us resolve ethical dilemmas surrounding the digital remains of deceased persons. Advances in machine learning and generative AI now allow for the "reanimation" of the dead through chatbots, deepfakes and other virtual presences. These practices raise serious ethical concerns; the dead have no control over how they are represented, while the grieving are potentially vulnerable to exploitation. Even so, Elder argues, Mohist philosophy reminds us not to dismiss firsthand accounts of personal experiences. Instead, we should take seriously the claims of those who find therapeutic value in these digital interactions.

Our final academic speaker, Dr. Christopher Moreman, PhD, is Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at California State University, East Bay. Moreman is a leading scholar on death, dying and the afterlife, a topic he explored in a recent book entitled *Beyond the Threshold: Afterlife*

*Beliefs and Experiences in World Religions* (2018). Moreman's talk opened with a simple question: can AI allow a person to survive bodily death? Answering this question, Moreman argued, requires us to think about what constitutes personhood. If personal identity is formed through relationships with others, then AI has the power not just to simulate personhood, but actually to become a person.

The morning concluded with a presentation by multi-award-winning interdisciplinary artist Sharon Stevens. Stevens shared her experience of creating and curating Equinox Vigil, an annual event held in Calgary's historic Union Cemetery. Inspired by global cultural traditions like Mexico's Day of the Dead celebrations, the Vigil offered a non-religious space for people to come together and honour the deceased. Featuring live music, performances and contemporary art installations, Equinox Vigil helped visitors to reflect on the natural cycle of life and death. In this spirit, Stevens also installed a shrine at the Community Forum where community members were invited to write down messages to the dead that were ritually burned after the event.

After lunch, attendees gathered in the Burnswest Theatre for a musical performance by ChamberFest West. Roman Rabinovich (piano), Jonathan Swensen (cello) and Alexi Kenney (violin) played Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A Minor, Opus 50, "À la mémoire d'un grand artiste," a piece written to commemorate the death of the composer's close friend and mentor, Nikolai Rubinstein. The day concluded with a panel discussion where the speakers responded to questions from the audience.



# Public Lectures

Engaging with the community is a crucial part of the Institute's mandate. CIH Resident Fellows offer a public lecture on their research, either during the Fellowship year or the year following. We also host invited speakers.

## The Joyful Sage: Renunciation and the Good Life in the *Mahābhārata* — Alumni All Access Event

October 24, 2024

### Christopher Framarin

Professor, Department of Philosophy/Department of Classics and Religion, University of Calgary, CIH 2023-24 Resident Fellow

In this lecture, Chris Framarin applied insights from early South Asian philosophy to understand the relationship between the good life and the moral life. The ancient East Indian epic the *Mahābhārata* contains several debates over the relative merit of the householder life versus the life of the renunciate. Most of the arguments against renunciation cite what might be described as moral considerations, emphasizing a person's obligations to family, teachers, ancestors, gods and others. An innovative model of renunciation in this text proposes a middle path, recommending that a person upholds their social obligations while adopting the motivations of the renunciate by living with perfect selfless, impartiality, inner balance and so on. While this ideal is not subject to the same moral objections as renunciation, it also raises a fundamental question: does such an approach mean sacrificing too much of what makes life worth living?

## Listening as Pain and Necessity: Hyperacusis, Noise Pollution and Auditory Accessibility — The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual McCready Fellow Lecture

November 28, 2024

### Anna Veprinska

Assistant Professor of English, University of Calgary  
CIH 2024-25 Wayne O. McCready Emerging Fellow

We are living in a noise pollution health crisis, with noise ranking as the second largest environmental cause of health problems. This presentation — part talk, part poetic reading — explored the tension between Anna Veprinska's personal sensitivity to noise and her use of audio learning accommodations.

Inspired by her own experience, Veprinska's presentation posed the poignant question: What happens when someone is both intolerant to and reliant on sound? The resulting discussion shed light on the noise pollution health crisis and our collective acoustic futures.

## Great Minds in Despair: The Forced Migration of German-Speaking Neuroscientists to North America, 1933-89

December 10, 2024

### Frank W. Stahnisch

Professor, Department of History, University of Calgary, CIH 2023-24 Resident Fellow

The rise of Nazism and Fascism in Central Europe in the 1930s triggered a wave of refugees that included many academics. In this lecture, Frank Stahnisch examined a lesser-known community of academic refugees — specialists in biological psychiatry and neuroscience — whose stories are largely untold. By tracing the development of neuroscience from Weimar Germany to the Cold War, Stahnisch illuminated the impact of this forced migration.

## Black Milk: The Fragility of Childhood in the Shoah — The University of Calgary Holocaust Memorial Lecture

February 2, 2025

### Sara R. Horowitz

Professor of Humanities and former Director of the Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies, York University, Toronto

In a public lecture hosted by Calgary Central Library, Dr. Sara Horowitz, PhD, used four life histories to understand how children who survived the Holocaust remembered their experience. These four survivors followed different paths and chose different literary genres to reflect on what they had been through, including literary memoir, fiction, graphic novel and photography. Despite their differences, all four life histories demonstrate the profound and lasting impact of wartime atrocity on children and childhood.

**The Abbasid Culture of Debate (750-1100): Competition, Piety and Knowledge — The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Egmont Lee Founders' Lecture**

**February 13, 2025**

**Mushegh Asatryan**

Associate Professor of Arabic and Muslim Cultures,  
University of Calgary, CIH 2023-24 Resident Fellow

Debate was integral to the culture of this early Islamic empire. Whether in royal courts, urban squares, mosques, or private homes, people debated theology, history, grammar and more. In this lecture, Asatryan examined the origins and significance of this tradition, concluding that it reflected a vibrant, learned and multi-religious society. Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and others used debate for various purposes — asserting social status, securing patronage and winning over converts. By studying these exchanges, we get a glimpse of how the people of the Abbasid empire defined legitimate knowledge.

**Projecting a Final Frame: Late and Last Works of Cinema — The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Naomi Lacey Memorial Lecture**

**March 4, 2025**

**Lee Carruthers**

Associate Professor of Film Studies, University of  
Calgary, CIH 2024-25 Naomi Lacey Resident Fellow

In this lecture, Carruthers used late and last works as a lens through which to examine style and meaning in contemporary global cinema. The lecture was informed, in part, by the passing of key auteur directors of the twentieth century, as well as the many celebrated filmmakers who are currently in the later stages of their careers. By analysing the last films that a director gets to make — whether consciously, as a considered closing act, or unexpectedly, as a stark endpoint to creative activity — this talk illuminated the unique qualities of final works as well as the ideas about lateness and lastness that we project onto them.



# 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Lecture in Applied Ethics

The CIH Endowment for Applied Ethics supports a biennial lecture series, featuring a guest lecture by an internationally prominent ethicist. This year, for the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Lecture in Applied Ethics, we welcomed Dr. Françoise Baylis, Distinguished Research Professor Emerita of Philosophy at Dalhousie University.

Françoise Baylis CM, ONS, PhD, FRSC, FISC is a leading philosopher and bioethics expert, renowned for her pioneering research at the intersection of healthcare ethics, policy and practice. She is the author of the award-winning book *Altered Inheritance: CRISPR and the Ethics of Human Genome Editing*, a critical guide to the ethical issues surrounding heritable human genome editing. She was a member of the Planning Committee for the First and the Third International Summits on Gene Editing (2015 and 2023) and a member of the WHO Expert Advisory Committee on Developing Global Standards for Governance and Oversight of Human Genome Editing (2019-2021). Baylis is a member of the Order of Nova Scotia and the Order of Canada and an elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and the International Science Council. In 2022, she was awarded the Killam Prize for the Humanities. The following year she won the Canada Council for the Arts Molson Prize in Humanities. These are Canada's highest honours for humanities scholars.

On March 18 at Calgary Central Library, Baylis discussed the ethical implications of heritable human genome editing. In high-income countries, images of “better,” “healthier” and more “perfect” babies and children are becoming increasingly pervasive. Since

the 1970s, we have moved from prenatal testing and test-tube babies to Nobel Prize sperm banks, to pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, contract pregnancy, egg freezing and now genome editing. Responding to these radical transformations, Baylis posed a provocative question: realistically, how long before parents start shopping for “designer babies” in genetic “supermarkets”?

In addition to the Invited Lecture in Applied Ethics, Dr. Baylis also gave a lecture at the University of Calgary on the Royal Society of Canada (RSC). In 2007, Baylis was elected a Fellow of the RSC and in 2024 was elected incoming President of the RSC. Her three-year term begins in November 2025. Her presentation reflected on the ways in which, taking into consideration the fractured and polarized landscape and the general erosion of trust, researchers and scholars from all disciplines and areas of interest can make positive contributions to Canada and beyond.



Photo: Françoise Baylis.

Photo: Calgary Central Library, Jeff Whyte - stock.adobe.com.

# The Sephardi Modernities Series

After years of stimulating discussion, the Sephardi Modernities Seminar Series will conclude with its final edition in 2026. This partnership between the Calgary Institute for the Humanities and the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University, with support from the Belzberg Program in Israel Studies at the University of Calgary, has reshaped our understanding of Jewish identity and political engagement across cultures and continents.

This series began during Dr. Angy Cohen's tenure as Jenny Belzberg Postdoctoral Associate in Israel Studies at the University of Calgary (2020-2023). Organized by Dr. Cohen and Dr. Yuval Evri of Brandeis University, the annual series has explored diverse experiences of Sephardi modernization. From its 2021 inception, the seminar has examined how these communities navigated the intersection of class, ethnicity, and nationality, with a focus on non-dichotomic identities, language, colonization and social transformation.

Each year has built upon this foundation, with specific themes illuminating different aspects of Sephardi experience. Examples include a series on the political and intellectual frameworks for studying the Sephardi/Levantine past (entitled *The Future of Our Histories: Recollecting the Past, Projecting the Future*), as well as a series focused specifically on Sephardi/Mizrahi women.

The 2025 edition, *Partners, Outsiders and Others: Sephardi Jews and the Global Left*, brought together scholars and activists from Jerusalem, Manchester,

Chicago, New York, Cambridge, and Rio de Janeiro for conversations about the involvement of Sephardi Jews in socialist, communist and anti-colonial movements, as well as their contributions to post-colonial thought. The response was overwhelming, with over 200 people registering for each event and steady attendance of 80 to 120 participants.

The series will conclude with a special closing conference in Madrid in September 2026, bringing together the most compelling voices from the seminar's history. This capstone event will lead to the publication of a special issue and has already generated significant interest from well-known scholars eager to participate in the discussion.

As we prepare to bid farewell to this innovative series, we want to recognize both its scholarly contributions and its demonstration of how academic partnerships can bridge borders to create meaningful dialogue about complex issues. The Sephardi Modernities Seminar Series leaves behind a rich legacy of collaboration across disciplines, languages, and countries that will continue to influence scholarship on this topic for years to come.



# Report on Endowments

Thanks to generous support from the community, the CIH has experienced remarkable growth since 2017. We are delighted to be able to support more researchers and to share their work with a wider audience of academics and engaged citizens.

This year, thanks to the CIH's existing endowments, four faculty members and two graduate students were awarded Resident Fellowships. These fellowships provided them with the time and space to pursue groundbreaking research, while also enabling them to gain fresh insights through interdisciplinary dialogue. By bringing together scholars from different departments and career stages, this program fosters research excellence through intellectual exchange.

Our endowments have also enabled us to support Interdisciplinary Working Groups, wherein scholars from across the university come together to tackle important issues from different disciplinary perspectives. These collaborations have resulted in lectures, workshops, conferences, exhibitions and tours. For many participants, the program serves as a launching pad for more ambitious projects, with some going on to secure millions of dollars in further research grants.

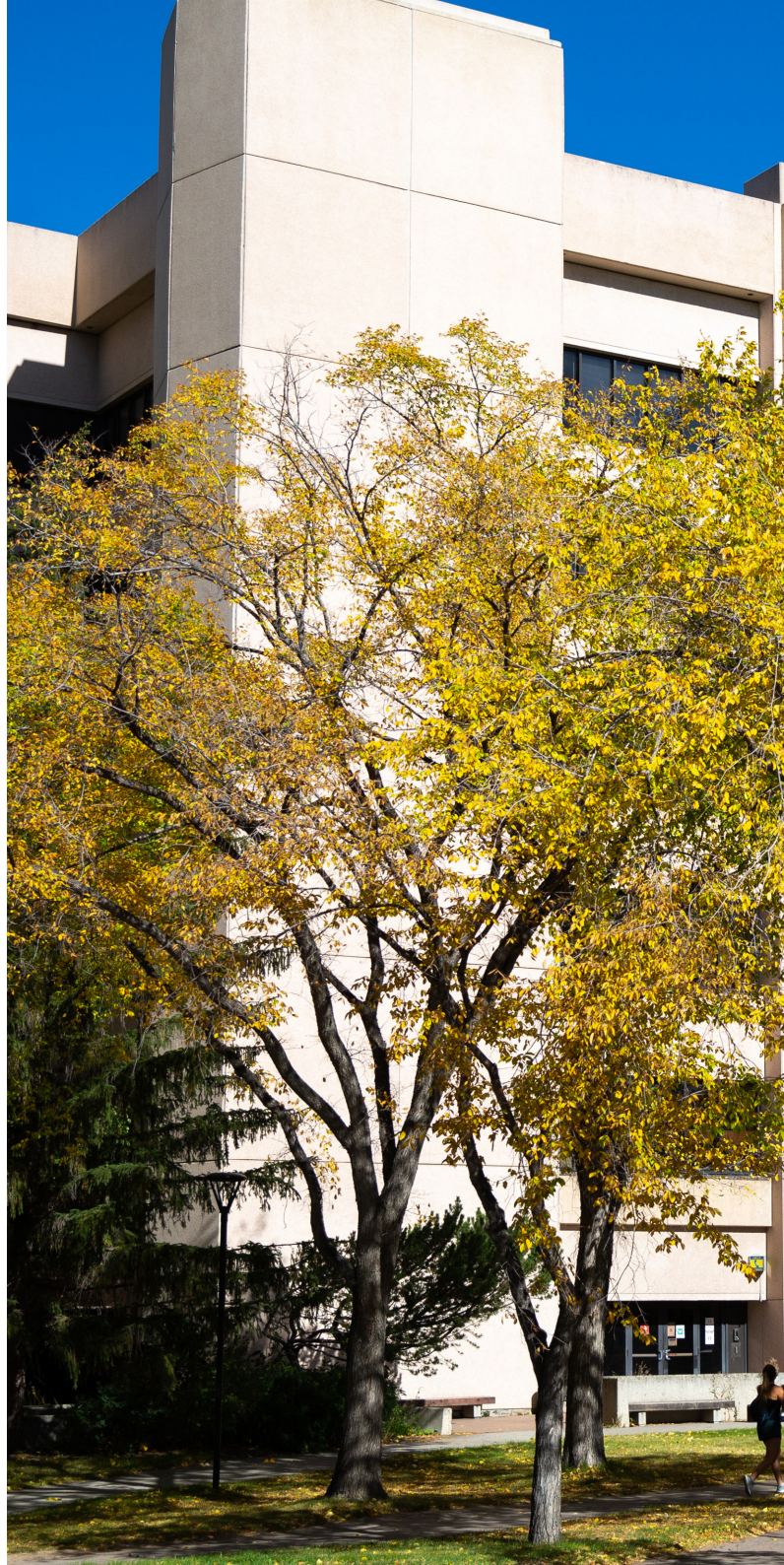
Support from our endowments has likewise helped us build meaningful connections between the university and the wider Calgary community. Through our Public Humanities Fellowships, PhD students can develop important new skills while contributing their expertise to public organizations across the city. Many of our public events and outreach activities, such as the Annual Community Forum, the LGBTQ2S+ Lecture, and the long-running Calgary Atlas Project, are also made possible through our endowments.

**We at the Calgary Institute for the Humanities are grateful to our donors for the confidence they have shown in us. Their support has enabled us to promote the value of the humanities and to champion scholars whose work critically examines what it means to be human.**

**\$3,988,027**

**Combined Market Value  
of all Endowments**

(Mar. 31, 2025)





# Financial Report

## Income

**\$142,734 University of Calgary**  
Operating Budget  
Arts Funding for Resident Fellowships

**\$28,299 Donations & Grants**  
Donations toward future endowments  
Donor contributions for operating expenses

**\$97,399 Endowment Income**  
Applied Ethics Endowment  
CIH Community Projects Endowment  
CIH Endowment  
CIH Fellowship Endowment  
Fred A. McKinnon  
Humanities Endowment  
Naomi Lacey Memorial Endowment  
Wayne O. McCready Endowment for an Emerging Scholar

**\$2,964 Sales of Services and Products**  
Calgary Atlas Project Map Sales

## Expenditures

**Salary and Benefits**  
**\$76,940.42** (30.1%)

**Resident Fellowships**  
**\$62,953.07** (24.6%)

**Artists-in-Residence**  
**\$10,000.00** (3.9%)

**Fellows Lectures and Guest Lecturers**  
**\$43,882.98** (17.1%)

**Meetings, Equipment and Office Expenses**  
**\$23,746.44** (9.3%)

**Graduate Student Assistant**  
**\$3,388.84** (1.3%)

**Conferences and Memberships**  
**\$4,937.75** (1.9%)

**Grants and Awards**  
**\$11,686.16** (4.6%)

**Calgary Atlas Project**  
**\$6,058.88** (2.4%)

**Interdisciplinary Working Groups**  
**\$12,425.62** (4.9%)



# Mythologies of Outer Space

A new publication with University  
of Calgary Press based on the  
exciting conversations started at  
our 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Community Forum  
in May 2022

Throughout history, humans have read meaning into the night sky. In *Mythologies of Outer Space*, the most recent publication in the CIH book series, academics and artists explore changing ideas about outer space from antiquity to the present day. What these different perspectives reveal is that stories about space — from Classical poetry to twentieth-century science fiction — have had a practical impact on the modern history of space exploration.

Inspired by the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Community Seminar, The Final Frontier, *Mythologies of Outer Space* continues the conversations sparked by that event. Drawing on the insights of literary scholars, artists and art critics, scientists and a poet, the book addresses urgent questions raised by humanity's growing presence in space. Is outer space *terra nullius*, open for settlement? What if there is life beyond earth? Will colonial history repeat itself on other planets? Should parts of outer space be protected, like nature reserves? What about resource extraction? Do celestial bodies, like the moon, have rights?

To answer these questions, editors Jim Ellis and Noreen Humble solicited contributions from astronaut Robert Thirsk, Mi'kmaw astronomer Hilding Neilson, digital humanities scholar Chris Pak and outer space archaeologist Alice Gorman, among others. Together, they demonstrate the value that critical perspectives from the humanities might bring when it comes to making decisions about the future exploration and exploitation of space.

Since its release, *Mythologies of Outer Space* has attracted significant public interest, reflecting an ongoing fascination with space. Media coverage by the *Calgary Herald* and Global News has promoted the book and increased public awareness of the CIH. On Feb. 22, 2025, Jim Ellis was joined by Noreen Humble, classicist Keith Sidwell and poet Kyle Flemmer to discuss their contributions to the volume at Space Night at the University of Calgary's Rothney Astrophysical Observatory. The event sold out, attracting an audience of three hundred people of all ages and backgrounds. More community events have been scheduled for the upcoming year, including a public presentation at Jasper's Dark Sky Festival on Oct. 24, 2025.



# Advisory Council

The Institute receives support and advice from the Advisory Council, which is composed of dedicated members from the external community.

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**Heather A. Bourne**

Former Chairman of Honens

**Lauren Bell**

Interior designer and education  
and healthcare board member

**Ronald B. Bond**

Post-secondary educational consultant

**Chris Dovey**

Senior Sales Associate at O'Connors Menswear  
and local arts advocate

**Michael Doyle**

Geophysicist and certified corporate director

**David Holub, Chair**

Lawyer, mediator and conflict resolution trainer

**Amanda Koyama**

Manager, Family and Children Services,  
Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

**Naomi Potter**

Director/Curator, Esker Foundation

**Nancy Tousley**

Senior art critic & independent curator

# Executive Council

Chaired by the Director, the Executive Council is composed primarily of university academics and advises on general operations and planning of activities.

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**Shelley Alexander**

Geography

**George Colpitts**

History

**Jim Ellis**

English / CIH, Director

**Penelope Farfan**

Drama, School of Creative and Performing Arts

**Noreen Humble**

Classics and Religion / CIH, Associate Director

**Ozouf Sénamin Amedegnato**

Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Culture

**Pablo Policzer**

Political Science

**Trevor Stark**

Art and Art History

**Nancy Tousley**

Senior art critic & independent curator

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