



UCI Humanities
Center

2021-2022 Theme: To Form a More Perfect Union?

Call for Co-Sponsorship Requests | **Application deadline May 24, 2021**

The 2021-2022 academic year brings the possibility of new beginnings. Still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the racialized violence that too rarely is met with justice and accountability, how might we envision and work towards a different and better society? How might we do this collectively, given the political polarization that is readily apparent in our society? The UCI Humanities Center will be engaging in a year-long exploration by asking the question of how we might “form a more perfect union”? Written in 1787, the U.S Constitution will be 235 years old in 2022. The preamble states: “We the people, in order to form a more perfect union...do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Throughout the academic year, the Humanities Center will be sponsoring speakers and programs to ask what is needed to form a more perfect union in the U.S. and beyond. The experiment that formed the United States was inspired by ideas and movements both within and beyond the nation. In turn, the U.S. constitution, written in a particular historical context, informed political formations elsewhere. What remains emancipatory, transformative, and capable of renewal in the Preamble, given the fact that the founding of the U. S. itself is based on Indigenous dispossession, slavery, selective immigration inclusion and exclusion, and gender/sexual hierarchy and normativity?

Does creating a unified society necessitate exclusion? Is community possible without creating divisions and hierarchies? What is needed legally, culturally, politically, socially, educationally, and emotionally to form a more cohesive community that, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., “bends toward justice”? What other examples of community formation and constitution writing from around the world, across time periods, and in our imaginations might we consider as models or warnings? Is it desirable to focus on perfecting nations and written laws at the expense of other formulations of community and relationality? What does the rich history and creative imaginings of counterpublic formation, in which smaller groups experiment with alternative forms of social organization, tell us both the desire to form unions differently and to enact divergent visions of social and political action?

We invite School of Humanities faculty and graduate students as well as their collaborators across the campus to apply for funding to address the question of how “to form a more perfect union” in the U.S. and/or beyond. How have these questions of creating more cohesive communities and the process of constitution making inspired political experiments, social movements, and cultural creations around the world? What might we learn from these historical, contemporary, and imaginative efforts to work towards community and justice?

The Humanities Center invites proposals that engage with multiple publics: the academic community at UCI and beyond, the campus-wide community including students and staff, as well as the regional community of Orange County and Southern California. Selected events are eligible to receive up to \$500 in co-sponsorship funding. Proposals that qualify for a collaborative conference grant can apply and receive both the “To form a more perfect union?” grant and a collaborative conference grant.

All applications for fall 2021 events are due by May 24, 2021, and decisions will be made by the end of June. An additional call for programs during winter and spring 2021 will be issued during fall quarter.

To apply: <http://bit.ly/UCIHCFall2021> For more information, please contact Prof. Judy Wu (j.wu@uci.edu), director of the Humanities Center.