

Robert Penn Warren Center FOR THE HUMANITIES

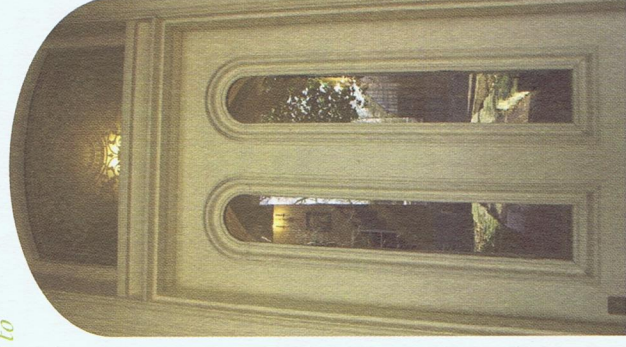
Letters

The semi-annual newsletter of the Warren Center, *Letters*, serves as a vehicle to share the work of the Center with a wide audience. The newsletter includes interviews with visiting scholars and essays on current themes as well as updated information on events, upcoming lectures, and ongoing seminars. Current and back issues of *Letters* can be accessed via the internet by visiting the Warren Center's website at www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center. By distributing the newsletter around the world, *Letters* disseminates interdisciplinary discussions about current research and teaching well beyond the confines of Vanderbilt University.

"The past year was one of the most intellectually rewarding of my life. The support and camaraderie I received from my colleagues in the seminar was unequalled by any similar experience since my graduate school days. In addition to this seminar, the Humanities Center provided a number of other formal and informal opportunities to engage with faculty and graduate students from across the campus."

Richard Grusin
William S. Vaughn Visiting Fellow, 1999/2000

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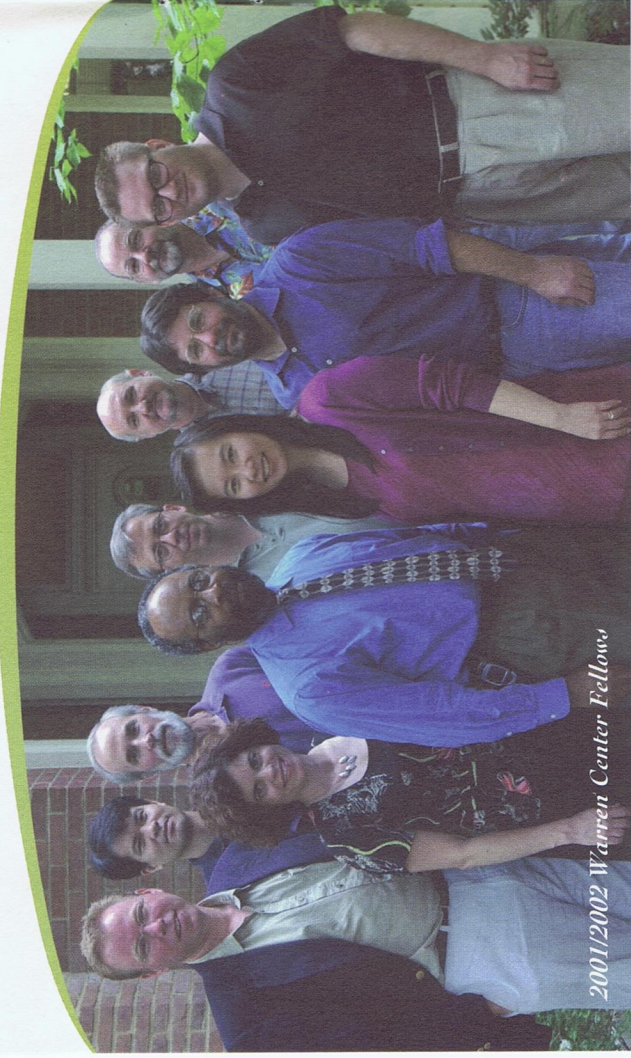
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities

The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities promotes interdisciplinary research and study in the humanities, social sciences, and, when appropriate, natural sciences. Because cooperative study in higher education is crucial to the modern university and the society it influences, the Warren Center is designed to intensify and increase interdisciplinary discussion of academic, social, and cultural issues. Members of the Vanderbilt community representing a wide variety of specializations take part in the Warren Center's programs. The work of the Warren Center strengthens the place of the humanities not only at Vanderbilt University but also within the larger society in which we live.

The Warren Center began its programs in January 1988 under the sponsorship of the College of Arts and Science and quickly became an intellectual center of activity, providing opportunities for faculty members in different disciplines and with related research and teaching interests to learn and study together. Not long after the Center's inception, the University named the program in honor of one of its most prominent graduates in the arts and humanities, Robert Penn Warren. Since the Warren Center's beginnings in 1988, participants have come from all departments and divisions of the University as well as from numerous institutions other than Vanderbilt.

An executive committee composed of faculty members representing an array of scholarly backgrounds works closely with the executive director of the Warren Center. The executive committee oversees the Center's activities and operations, which include setting Center policy, approving the appointments of seminars and Fellows, and seeking funds to support and endow the Center.



2001/2002 Warren Center Fellows

"The Warren Center is a space where scholars from different communities can form their own community through collaborative scholarship, probing discussion, and critical examination and by these actions enhance, fittingly enough, our humanity as an institution."

—Chancellor E. Gordon Gee

Fellows Program

A central feature of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, the annual theme-based Fellows Program attracts faculty members representing a diverse range of interests. The theme for the Fellows Program arises from the strengths and interests of University faculty members, as well as from important social, political, and cultural events. In addition, the theme's potential bearing on the intellectual life of the College of Arts and Science as a whole receives significant consideration. Recent Fellows have examined such themes as "Inventing Work," "Memory, Identity, and Political Action," "Constructions, Destructions, and Deconstructions of Nature," and "Rediscovering the New World: Exploring Lines of Contact among the Americas and within the United States."

Once the Center's executive committee has chosen the yearly theme, faculty members apply for participation in the program. The Fellows, who are chosen by the executive committee, meet weekly to give seminar presentations, develop common areas of investigation, and devise special programs, including conferences and seminars for guest speakers. Each Fellow receives a research fund to supplement his or her academic research. In addition, the group as a whole can access funds for visiting speakers, conferences, or other special projects, all of which help to ensure that the campus as a whole benefits from the Fellows' work. With each Fellow occupying a study in the Vaughn Home, informal daily conversations supplement the more formal exchanges



in seminar meetings. Currently, the named fellowships of the program are the Spence and Rebecca Webb Wilson Fellow, the Jacque Voegeli Fellow, and the William S. Vaughn Fellow.

The Warren Center selects one visiting scholar per year from another institution to join the Fellows Program. With a distinguished record for research, publication, and teaching in the program's chosen theme, the Visiting Fellow further enriches the diversity and interdisciplinary nature of the program. The Visiting Fellow receives a salary for the academic year, a furnished study in the Vaughn home, and access to Vanderbilt's considerable resources for research on campus. This Fellowship affords faculty members from other institutions a unique opportunity to combine research with lively and thoughtful discourse with colleagues of similar interests.

Beyond the obvious benefits for the teaching and research of the individual participants, the year-long programs have resulted in newly offered courses for undergraduate and graduate students, University-wide lecture series, international conferences, alumni and community education programs, and the publication of books and articles. In 1995, for example, the University of Georgia Press published the work and writings of a previous Fellows program in a collection of essays entitled *The South as an American Problem*. In addition to such tangible products, the intellectual bonds formed between Fellows during their appointments to the Warren Center continue to influence the study and teaching of the humanities long after each program ends.

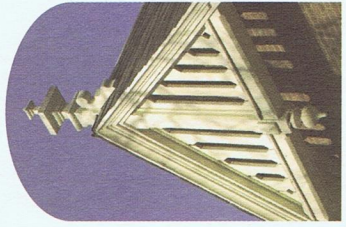
Seminars

In addition to the Fellows Program, the Warren Center sponsors a variety of seminars, study groups, and workshops that involve students and faculty members. One type of seminar brings together eight to ten scholars who meet regularly throughout the academic year to pursue a common interest or theme. Another type of seminar consists of more broadly conceived topics aimed at the nonspecialist. A third type of seminar focuses on a specific paper, book, or current event. The range of the Warren Center's seminars reflects the broad intellectual interests of Vanderbilt's faculty members and students. A sampling of past seminar topics include "Baudelaire and His Critics," "Bible and Literature," "Gender and Sexuality," "Medicine, Health, and Society," "Philosophical Fictions," and "Social Construction of the Body." During the course of the year, the Center typically sponsors eight to twelve of these seminars or workshops, and these programs often spark interest for further development into a year-long Fellows Program.

After participating in a Warren Center seminar, Classical Studies Professor Tom McGinn wrote:

"...It seems that no Warren Center seminar ever really ends but reappears in a half-dozen new forms. The Center is an unparalleled program that enables its participants to learn from one another. But I suspect that this is far from being the sole explanation for its popularity among the faculty. The collective enthusiasm of one's colleagues generates an interest just as powerful as the force of their collective wisdom."





Special Programs

Through a variety of special programs each year, the Warren Center facilitates ongoing learning opportunities for the Vanderbilt community and exercises significant flexibility in designing these programs to meet current needs. Many of the special programs and conferences involve the Warren Center's collaboration with other campus divisions and national organizations. For

example, the Warren Center received funding from the Tennessee Holocaust Commission and the Zimmerman Family Foundation to host a year-long project entitled "The Holocaust, Genocide, and the Teaching of Ethical Values." The work of this group of scholars and secondary school teachers from around the state of Tennessee resulted in the publication of *The Holocaust and Other Genocides: History, Representations, Ethics* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2002). The volume, edited by Vanderbilt University History Professor Helmut Walser Smith, is the first curriculum to tie the teaching of the Holocaust to an analysis of the genocides in Armenia, Bosnia and Kosovo, and Rwanda.

The Warren Center also worked closely with the Law School to present a two-day conference on the intersection of legal and literary theory. In conjunction with the Faculty Senate, the Warren Center organized a working conference on "Ethics and the University." Other special programs have included "The Seventieth Anniversary of the Scopes Trial," and "Religion and Public Life: Is America God's Country?" The Warren Center also co-sponsored Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Jose Ramos-Horta's lecture on non-violence (part of the Symposium 2000 conference hosted by the College of Arts and Science) and the Millennial Gathering of the Writers of the New South.

During the summer months, the Warren Center hosts special seminars for graduate students, secondary school teachers, and college teachers from throughout the nation. Taught by Vanderbilt faculty members, these summer programs seek to strengthen the teaching and understanding of the humanities in high school and regional colleges. For example, the Warren Center hosted a week-long professional development program entitled "We the People... The Citizen and the Constitution" for educators from across Tennessee.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the program helped teachers find creative ways to educate students on the history and principles of constitutional government. Five constitutional scholars from Vanderbilt's faculty led the program, which included mock congressional hearings conducted by participating teachers.

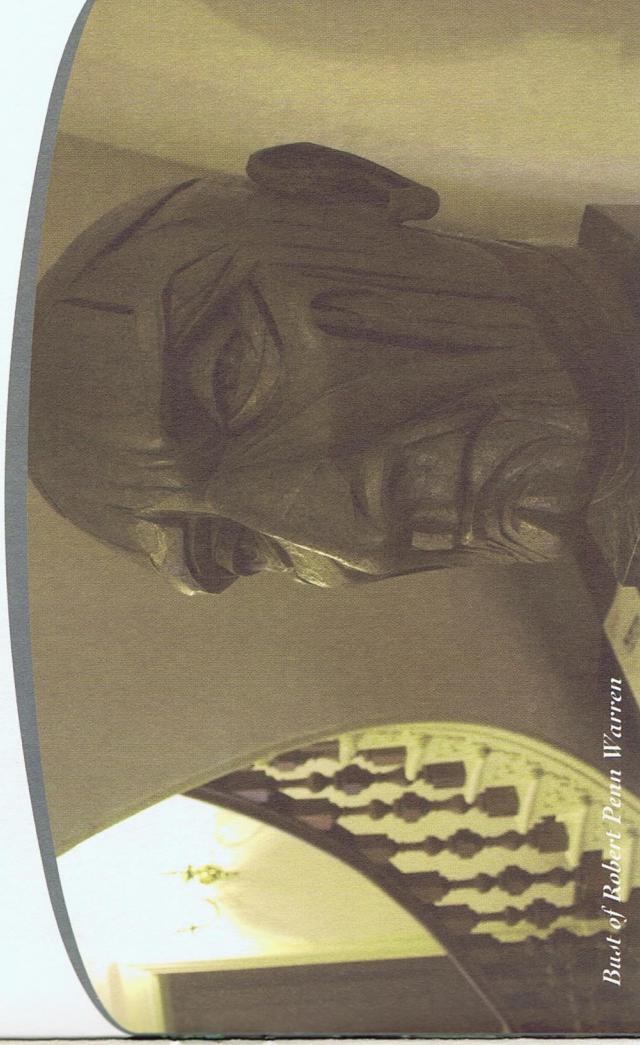
Lecture Series

Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture

The Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture Series was established in 1994 to bring outstanding scholars to Vanderbilt to speak on significant topics in the humanities. The series honors Harry C. Howard, Jr. (B.A. Vanderbilt, 1951), and was made possible through the endowment of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Nash, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. George D. Renfro. Past lecturers have included Arnold Rampersad (Sara Hart Kimball Professor in the Humanities, Stanford University), Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Professor of Communication and Walter H. Annenberg Dean, The Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania), Kay Redfield Jamison (Professor of Psychiatry, Johns Hopkins University, and Honorary Professor of English, University of St. Andrews [Scotland]), and Kwame Anthony Appiah (Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy, Princeton University).

Robert Penn Warren Lecture on Southern Letters

The annual Robert Penn Warren Lecture on Southern Letters was founded in 1998 as a collaborative project between the Warren Center and Humanities Tennessee. The lecture provides a public forum for the exploration of topics related to Southern writing. Past lecturers have included Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David Levering Lewis; noted fiction writer William Styron, also a Pulitzer winner; renowned novelist, poet, and essayist Reynolds Price; and distinguished Mississippi novelist Elizabeth Spencer.



Bust of Robert Penn Warren