

Proposal for Mellon 23 Faculty Workshop

Media Studies in the Liberal Arts

In October 2004, Middlebury College hosted a Mellon-sponsored symposium on Film & Media Studies in the Liberal Arts, drawing together 29 participants from Middlebury, Denison, Vassar, and Rhodes Colleges, DePauw and Furman Universities, and the Claremont Colleges (with representatives from Pitzer, Pomona, and Scripps Colleges) for a three-day conversation about the role of film and media studies in the liberal arts environment. The goals of this symposium — to develop a network of film & media liberal arts educators, to share insights from our respective campuses, and to develop opportunities to strengthen various programs and faculty activities in film and media studies across liberal arts colleges — were fully met, as participants left with a range of new colleagues and new models for integrating the relatively new academic area of film and media studies into established curricula.

Since the time of that symposium, several of the media studies programs there represented have gained deeper curricular traction within their institutions (Claremont's two media studies programs, at Pitzer and Pomona, have merged into one five-college Intercollegiate Media Studies major, and Vassar has graduated its first cohort of media studies majors, to name only two such examples). More importantly, however, the Mellon 8 of the time of that workshop has now expanded to the Mellon 23, drawing into potential participation in a follow-up workshop a number of institutions (such as Carleton, Bryn Mawr, and Swarthmore) that were not eligible for the first symposium. We would therefore like to propose a follow-up to the Fall 2004 symposium, to further explore the role of media studies in particular in the small liberal arts college, exploring how such programs are negotiating the transformation of their fields through the increasing dominance of digital media, as well as the growing pains that these programs may have encountered as they have become more established within their institutions. We believe that focusing specifically on media studies and the transformations within both the mass media culture and potential pedagogical opportunities will provide a strong focus and present opportunities for long-term collaboration.

This two-day follow-up workshop, to be held at Pomona College during Fall/Winter 2008-09, will examine the current state of media studies at a broad range of liberal arts institutions in the Mellon 23 cluster. The workshop will take as its primary points of focus these questions of both shifting curricular engagements and shifting institutional settings, including the relationship between the interdisciplinary and the disciplinary aspects of media studies. While many such programs have begun their lives as the collective work of scholars with formal training and appointments in such diverse disciplines as Literature, Sociology, Communication, Anthropology, History, Art History, and so forth, institutional strictures around the allocation of resources, and the increasing number of Ph.D. granting programs in film and media studies, suggest a certain pressure toward disciplinarity. Moreover, the spread of digital media usage across the curriculum has increased the demands placed on media studies programs, pressuring them toward further growth and serving as a campus resource for digital pedagogies.

The core workshop organizers will invite active participation from as many institutions as possible, structuring the workshop around a series of participant-designed and panel-led discussions, each designed to facilitate conversations around core questions such as:

- In what ways have media studies programs remained interdisciplinary? What are the relative gains and losses involved in the pressure toward disciplinarity?
- What is the relationship between media production and critical studies in the small liberal arts context? How has the relationship between theory and practice been changed by the increasing penetration of digital technologies?
- How do media studies programs negotiate their relationships with other curricular and administrative interests, including the use of new media technologies in other academic units?
- How has the rise of digital media shifted the curricular and service demands placed on media studies programs?
- How are media studies programs preparing their students for graduate study? How does such preparation work in tandem or conflict with the desire for training for work in industry?

Alongside these panels, the workshop will present participants with opportunities for hands-on engagement with new technologies, allowing for an exploration of their pedagogical possibilities. One such session may be led by Bryan Alexander, Research Director of NITLE, who will [...] discuss how media studies have been embraced across the curricula of liberal arts colleges, and help facilitate future collaborations and professional development opportunities. Additionally, we hope to take advantage of the southern California locale to draw upon experts from USC's Institute for Multimedia Literacy, a major international research center for digital media pedagogies.

One of the desired outcomes for the workshop will be the creation of a digital resource for media pedagogy in liberal arts colleges, perhaps in the form of a collaborative wiki collecting examples of syllabi, projects, and educational technology resources. Such a collective resource will serve as one of the primary means of evaluating, in an ongoing fashion, the workshop's outcome. We hope that this persistent and ongoing resource will serve more faculty members than those gathering at Pomona and reach beyond the scope of the Mellon 23.

Workshop organizers (brief CVs attached):

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Potential participants:

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In addition to these participants from the Mellon 23, the workshop will take advantage of the other members of the Claremont Colleges, drawing upon the expertise of the media studies faculty from Pitzer and Claremont McKenna Colleges.