

2023-2024

Teaching & Learning

To learn from and with each other



PHOTO CREDIT: FRANK WILLIAMS

A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Aaron D. Cobb & Lynn Stallings, Project Directors

The mission of the Civil Rights & Civic Virtue Society is to foster civic identity, commitment, and civic-mindedness through community-engaged learning experiences. Toward this end, we seek to support pedagogical and curricular innovation through faculty participation in summer seminars and a Faculty Fellows Community of Practice (FFCP). Summer seminar participants commit to implementing a particular project in scholarship, teaching, or service following the conclusion of the summer seminar. This FFCP is a small group of faculty who commit to work with each other over the course of an academic year to develop and implement a new pedagogical or curricular initiative related to civil rights, civic virtue, and character formation.

The culminating event of the year's work is the "Out of the Box Teaching Workshop" co-hosted with a number of offices throughout the campus, including CRCV, the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Experiential Education and Engagement Center, the Faculty Development Institute, the Guest Speakers Committee, HHMI Project, and Staff Council. The conference featured presentations by Dr. Peter Felten on the importance of belonging for student engagement; Ms. Ashley Jones, poet laureate for the state of Alabama, on the importance of empathy in finding one's voice; Dr. Paige McGinley on the role of rehearsals in preparing for direct action campaigns in the Civil Rights Movement; and by Dr. Lindsay Diamond on strategies for student engagement. Additionally, five of our summer seminar participants presented posters and seven faculty fellows facilitated workshops related to their year-long projects. This booklet presents a brief snapshot of some of this exciting work!



Highlights from 2023-2024

A Culture of Learning

Summer Seminar
Faculty Fellows Posters

Faculty Fellows Community
of Practice Workshops

Additional Impacts





Honors student, Arlysea Thomas, and the faculty advisor, Prof. Quintavius Rover, present about the Mothers of Gynecology to Dr. Peter Felten at our poster session.

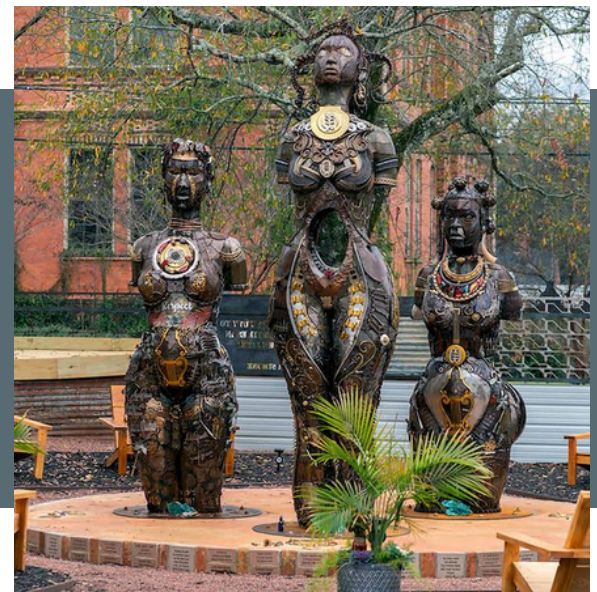
PROF. QUINTAVIUS ROVER

Professor Rover (Lecturer of Biology) engaged anatomy and physiology students in a project titled “Unveiling History: The Mothers of Gynecology and The Father of Gynecology.” His overarching objectives in this project were (1) to examine the legacy of Dr. J. Marion Sims, the “Father of Gynecology,” and the legacy the “Mothers of Gynecology,” Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsey; (2) to examine how each of these figures have been memorialized to in Alabama and US history; and (3) to facilitate critical thinking and discussion among students about the ethics of medical experimentation on enslaved women and the importance of acknowledging the contributions of Black Americans in medicine. In the course of this project, students reflected on the importance of figures like Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsey, whose contributions to the field have been memorialized in important local art by Michelle Browder. By centering their stories, students recognize the significant role marginalized populations played in advancing the fields of medicine, biomedical science, and medical ethics. It also promotes a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding race, gender, and medicine in American history.

DR. JACKIE MCNETT

Dr. McNett (Associate Professor of Criminal Justice) integrated content related to civil rights and civic virtues in her special topics course in Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) titled Protests, Riots, and Panic Assignment. This course explored group behavior in times of crises, specifically focusing on protests, riots, and panic. Special attention was given to motivations, social and legal consequences, and the use of social media in disseminating information. As a required text, students engaged with the text we selected for our summer seminar, *Cradle of Freedom: Alabama and the Movement that Changed America*. Because this was an online course, students were required to visit a historic site and/or important museum of their choosing that related to civil rights history within close proximity to their own home. Students then reflected on how these visits supplemented their knowledge from the class materials and readings. As part of their final assignment, students developed a “Hero Highlight” where they highlighted an unsung hero that emerged during a time of crisis. In reflecting on her use of these materials, McNett writes, “The readings were very helpful in showing that civic virtues vary as do the many ways people can contribute to the betterment of their community. I particularly enjoyed reading about justice as that’s something that especially resonates with my students in HSEM and criminal justice. As such, it’s important to equip them with the knowledge and foundation to ensure their attitudes, beliefs, and values align with the goals of being committed to change/betterment of the community and ensuring safety and justice within the field.”

The exhibit pictured to the right is a picture of the Mothers of Gynecology Monument in Montgomery, Alabama. This monument was created by Michelle Browder, a highly acclaimed local activist and artist whose works—including the monument, the Anarcha Lucy Betsey Memorial, and You May Feel a Little Pressure mural—have been widely recognized in major national outlets such as NPR, The Washington Post, PBS Newshour, and USA Today. Browder was a featured speaker for the Living Exemplar talk at our 2023 Out of the Box Teaching Workshop



DR. BRETT LEHMAN, DR. PIA KNIGGE, AND DR. KIM BRACKETT

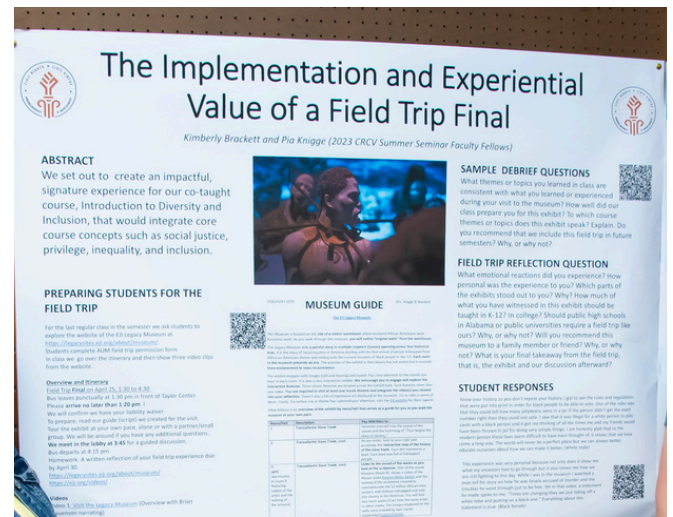
The summer seminar led to a collaborative project to analyze results of distinct assignments related to diversity, equity, and inclusion on AUM's campus. These faculty treated students' written responses to their respective assignments as qualitative data, organized the data by course and semester, and coded the data for themes. In reflection on these assignments, they noted two preliminary themes: (1) students keenly observe and have more questions about the self-segregation of students by ethnicity and race on campus and (2) some students expressed concerns that AUM could be a more welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBTQ students.



DR. KIM BRACKETT AND DR. PIA KNIGGE

The experience of the CRCV Summer Seminar was a catalyst for the launch of a new course along with accompanying course materials specifically related to appreciating diversity. They piloted the course, Introduction to Diversity & Inclusion, in fall 2023. Dr. Brackett (Professor of Sociology) writes, "We wanted to educate students about how they might follow up on what they learned in the course with subsequent actions. Modeling some of the discussion and pedagogical elements from the Summer Seminar, we employed a flipped classroom approach where students engaged with reading and video instruction outside of class time and used the class time to interact with classmates via discussion, debate, and team tasks. Not only did this allow for students to get to know one another, but it required them to engage with the diverse viewpoints and experiences of their peers. While many of the topics we discuss can be challenging, we encouraged perseverance in these pursuits. We rewarded the students' courage to share their experiences and to struggle with difficult ideas in their weekly journal entries." They created an interactive final that involved a field trip to one of Montgomery's signature attractions, The Legacy Museum. Students were prepared throughout the semester to ask critical questions about the consequences of prejudice, discrimination, inequality, and to consider solutions to the harmful impacts.

As a result of this initial analysis, they have decided to use a common assignment in Fall 24 semester and to administer the assignment in core classes offered by their departments to represent a broader spectrum of AUM students. They hope that this additional data will add to the evidence about student experiences at AUM and contribute to improvements in the campus culture surrounding issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, they are considering drafting a conference paper to be presented at a teaching conference or a panel focusing on pedagogy. Reflecting on his experiences, Lehman (Associate Professor of Sociology) writes that the summer seminar "helped convince me to continue developing a focus in the pedagogy and study of college/university campus life. As a sociologist, it isn't a stretch to frame a campus as its own society. I know the CRCV has a focus on (off-campus) community engagement, but I am developing more of a niche in using the campus as a site to experientially learn about sociological topics and learn about the process of engaging in social change efforts. As a complex organization, any college or university campus is a relevant arena to gain experience in needs assessment, advocacy, problem-solving, leadership, etc."



One of the important deliverables they created for this assignment was a guide for touring the museum, questions for a debriefing discussion, and a prompt for a written reflection. They are working on a virtual version of the field trip for use in online courses. Dr. Knigge (Assistant Professor of Political Science) notes that they have plans to write a paper or panel presentation for consideration at a pedagogically-focused conference.



DR. NICHOLAS CUBA

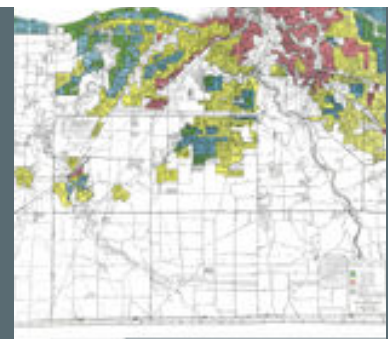
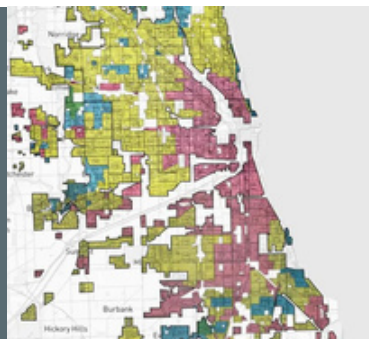
Dr. Cuba (Assistant Professor of Environmental Science) designed and implemented a multi-week module in his course Geographic Information Systems and Database Design utilizing hundreds of historical (mid 20th Century) aerial photographs of Montgomery County. These images allow for contextualization of past geographies before, during, and after the decades of civil rights movement activities, and comparison of past and present conditions. Reflecting on his experience, Cuba writes, “The pedagogical work for CRCV has already had substantial impact on my research agenda as I draw up plans for local projects. For example, in early 2024 I adapted an existing plan to survey invasive plant species using ground and drone observations for a submission to the Build and Broaden program in NSF’s Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate. This adaptation proposed using measures of observed change as indicators of spatial disinvestment in Montgomery following the civil rights movement and forced desegregation in the mid 20th Century.”

DR. AGNITRA ROY CHOUDHURY

Dr. Choudhury (Associate Professor of Economics) engaged economics students in a project that explored redlining policies and their long term economic effects on communities. Students were randomly assigned to a city that has a redlining map available online. They had to do some basic research evaluating redlining policy affecting their city. Students could use the map to identify the logic and language used to support red lining of the given regions. Some of the languages used included “desirable environments” and “undesirable environments,” commonly associated with immigrant populations and African American neighborhoods. The students were then required to analyze whether specific markets illustrated some form of correlation that aligned with the red lining maps. In other words, the students had to identify whether poorer economic outcomes were present in redlined zones while better economic outcomes were commonly observed in the green or blue zones. Each student had a specific market to analyze. They were given a choice between the following markets: housing, household income, education, health, and crime. Students were randomly distributed into a group. Each group had a maximum number of 3 students. Each group was assigned a city, and each student had to pick their specific market. Finally, students had to present their findings in class, explaining whether redlining had persistent long-term effects of economic outcomes. Reflecting about his experiences, Choudhury writes, “This project was challenging to put together. The main obstacle was that I was dealing with students with limited exposure to economic theory and quantitative analysis.



I decided to use more visual tools, such as maps and graphs, to help assist students in visualizing location-based endogeneities. For example, crime rates are often higher in poorer neighborhoods. However, we cannot decipher whether low household incomes contribute to higher crime rates, or whether high crime rates lead to a fall in property values. I had to challenge my own belief system to enable a broad discussion assessing red lining and firm/individual behavior. It was also challenging to simplify these complex issues using basic economic models. This exercise has helped me develop new pedagogy tools that I will be using in other classes. I learned that pictures and maps can be more useful than mathematical equations to explain fundamental concepts to students.”





DR. DJUANA DUNCOMBE-PADEN

Dr. Duncombe-Paden (Lecturer, University College) integrated civil rights and civic virtue themes in a section of UNIV 1000, AUM's first-year experience course. This course already embeds the qualities of curiosity, perseverance, autonomy, humility, and honesty within student reflection on how to become a successful college student and lifelong learner.

Duncombe-Paden's section focused on crucial role models in the Civil Rights Movement and employed reflection on the virtues of justice, courage, hope, perseverance, and solidarity. In this context, they watched the movie "The Best of Enemies" and utilized the plot as well as the characterizations depicted to reflect on the virtues of the main characters, how community builds character, and what virtues they see in themselves and/or changes needed. Finally, they used song lyrics and videos from various genres of music to reveal how some of the virtues are described in media that students use almost every day. This project enabled students to consider how virtues inform and impact academic, personal, and vocational development. Duncombe-Paden writes, "From this experience, I developed a deeper appreciation for the complexities of teaching civic virtues to students and the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. In the future, I hope to continue to explore innovative approaches to promote civic virtues and nurture informed and engaged students and citizens."

DR. SHANNON HOWARD

Dr. Howard (Associate Professor of English) regularly teaches a research-based composition course in the Department of English and Philosophy. In a recent section of the course, students created a video in which they conversed and reacted to music in the style of Twinsthenewtrend, two Black brothers who have become famous for their enthusiastic responses to music. This video project had two primary aims: to help students identify gaps in research projects and to develop the "research conversation" by talking to a peer on camera, and to practice public speaking. In reflection on her student submissions, Howard became concerned that this assignment may have unintentionally video compositions that bear a resemblance to minstrelsy. She said, "This experience made me realize that more work is needed to educate white teachers about the contested nature of performances onscreen and to shape assignments accordingly." In her workshop about her project, Howard reviewed video work as part of the writing process that, despite our best efforts, might reinforce racist paradigms of pop culture entertainment. She described key characteristics of minstrelsy that will help instructors decenter the white gaze. Then she suggested new ways to assign video texts that act as prewriting activities rather than culminating ones. Ultimately, she sought to engage participants in a conversation about the multiple ways of engaging in multimodality that work to revise rather than reinforce white privilege.



DR. HILARY GAMBLE

Dr. Gamble (Associate Professor of Communication) participated in the Faculty Fellows Community of Practice in conjunction with her work to establish a community news service program at AUM. This program aimed to provide communications students with valuable hands-on experience in reporting and writing, while actively engaging with local communities and news providers in central Alabama. In her application, she wrote, "This is one of the biggest teaching projects I have ever undertaken. I'm excited to start piloting the program in the Fall, but I'm also scared to do it alone."

In her workshop, Gamble showed how community informational interviews can nurture important civic virtues in students. She discussed strategies for facilitating informational interviews that build solidarity, cultivate courage, and advance justice through journalism. She writes, "Informational interviews provide a powerful way for students to practice listening deeply, asking insightful questions, and amplifying community voices and perspectives. When conducted thoughtfully and ethically, these interviews can foster hope by unearthing underreported stories of perseverance and positive change efforts. They challenge students to move beyond compartmentalized thinking and develop a nuanced understanding of complex civic issues."

DR. HEATHER WITCHER

Dr. Witcher (Assistant Professor of English) redeveloped her English Composition II course to focus on the theme, Legacies of Montgomery. In the first weeks of the semester, students undertook a visit to the Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace & Justice, as well as a downtown tour of Montgomery, focusing on sites of interest to Civil Rights. Grounded in this experiential learning, students completed a semester-long research project that enabled them to question the narrative that our city tells its public through the erection and continued support of specific monuments or sites of memorialization. Students then created a proposal addressed to the Alabama Historical Commission, with their choice of argument: (1) the creation of an entirely new monument/site of memorialization; (2) the expansion of an existing monument/site of memorialization; (3) the removal of an existing monument/site of memorialization. In the first two months of the semester, students collaboratively learned about the history of Montgomery. As a class, students situated their research around the long Civil Rights Movement and its legacy; the impact of Indigenous slavery and the colonization of Alabama lands; and the infrastructural legacy of Montgomery, exploring how the interstates and neighborhoods created were direct results of racism and segregation. Students explored existing artifacts and analyzed the narratives and arguments surrounding those artifacts. As a whole, the class interrogated the conflicting tension between Montgomery as the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement and its central role in justice for the marginalized and its continuing upholding of the Confederacy.



DR. KEITH KRAWCZYNSKI

Dr. Krawczynski (Professor of History) leads AUM's Oral History Program. In his course on Oral History, students received instruction on the importance and fundamentals of oral history collection. Additionally, students had the opportunity to collect oral histories from individuals in the local community. In this project, students conducted interviews of people who participated in the March 1965 civil rights march to pressure the federal government to pass a voting rights act prohibiting racial discrimination in voting. Unique from many other interviews of civil rights participants, students were asked to emphasize the role of certain civic virtues—justice, hope, courage, perseverance and solidarity—in the marcher's support of and participation in the Selma to Montgomery march. In doing so, the larger course objective was to drive home to students the historical fact that if people are to make significant positive change in their community, they must possess and conduct themselves according to the civic virtues listed above, among others.



In reflecting on the professional impact of his experience implementing this project, Krawczynski writes, "...the program inspired me to research and read books on incorporating civic virtue in my curriculum. I have begun to collect a little library of books and articles related to improving the curriculum in higher education. Collectively, these books make a clarion call for a radical transformation in higher education, one that provides students with the moral foundation, knowledge, skills, and practice necessary not only for individual success but for successful community engagement and improvement. Therefore, what I want to do is to work with other faculty at Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM) to push for a change in the University's curriculum, one that emphasizes both the teaching and practice of civic virtues. The CRCV Program is doing excellent work in encouraging teachers to incorporate civic virtues into their curriculum. As such, I see it as a model for a University-wide change in the curriculum."