



“The Humanities and/in the Public Sphere”

Marymount University

Arlington, VA

April 10-11, 2015

Musing about the role of poetry in a prosaic world, William Logan sketches a “blue-sky” curriculum for public education in the June 14, 2014 *New York Times* Sunday Review; “teach America’s kids to read,” he opines, “by making them read poetry. . . . A child taught to parse a sentence by Dickinson would have no trouble understanding Donald H. Rumsfeld’s known knowns and unknown unknowns.” While Logan readily admits that a poetry-based curriculum is untenable, he nonetheless suggests that attending carefully to language--and history, and art, and all the other cultural products of human life--is essential. How? Why? To what ends, and under what circumstances?

The Virginia Humanities Conference invites proposals for papers, panel sessions, performances, and other presentation modes that explore the role of the humanities in the public sphere. Informed by current and ongoing discussions about the “crisis” in the humanities, this theme seeks to generate discussion around the public significance--ethical, moral, political, cultural, even economic--of humanistic study and creativity. Dr. Steven Lubar, Professor of American Studies and former Director of the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage at Brown University, will give a keynote lecture on museum history and American culture. The conference will be framed by group excursions to related events in the Washington, DC, area.

Possible topics for presentations include, but are not limited to:

- policy, politics and the humanities
- funding the humanities
- museum culture and tourism
- digital humanities and/or digital history
- education and the humanities
- debating the “crisis” in the humanities
- literature in the public sphere
- making sense of history
- technology and the humanities
- ethics and/in public humanities
- public art and humanities initiatives
- telling and/or collecting stories in public
- public performance and public art
- public humanities versus private humanities
- artistic performances that explore publicity in some dimension

Please submit a 250-word proposal for individual presentations, with working title(s), to Tonya Howe using the proposal form at http://vahumanitiesconference.org/?page_id=68 (or via email at thowe@marymount.edu). Proposals for panel sessions should identify all participants and include both an overview and a brief abstract of each presentation. Deadline for receipt of *panel* proposals: December 15, 2014. Deadline for receipt of *individual presentation* proposals: January 30, 2015. For more information, please visit vahumanitiesconference.org.