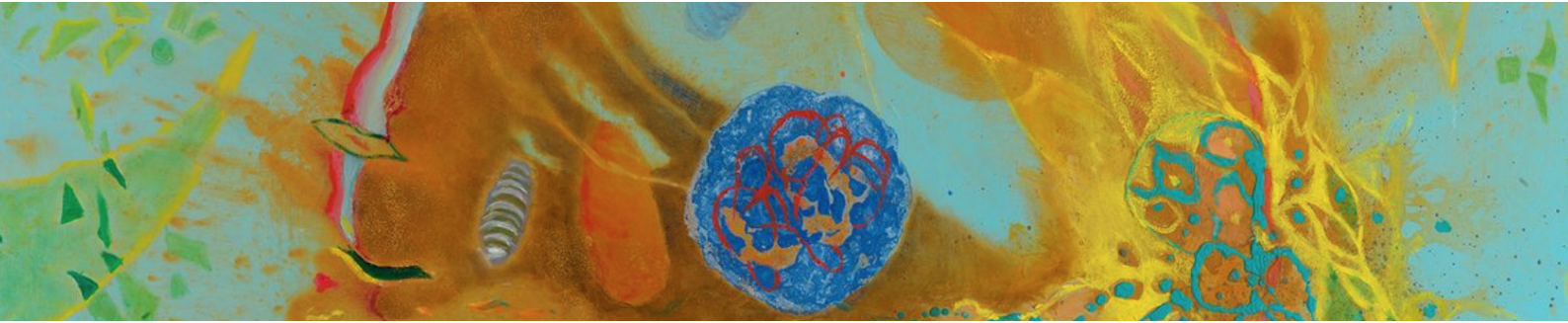


Boston University Health Humanities

SUMMER 2021 HEALTH HUMANITIES FELLOWSHIP REPORT



A Note from the Project Director:

I am delighted to introduce the inaugural cohort of Health Humanities Summer Research Fellows! Over this past summer, eight undergraduate fellows undertook research in the health humanities. Their projects, presented during two sessions in August, were as diverse as they were inspired, ranging from an analysis of the politics of language and translation in medical publications to the relationship between poetry and healing, from representations of anti-Asian racism in the midst of COVID to a literary analysis of women's mental health in contemporary fiction. You can read more about our fellows and their projects below.

Our fellows conducted their research under the guidance of our very generous faculty mentors as well as two wonderful graduate student advisors, whose bios also appear below. I wish to thank them for their amazing work and also to thank Sophie Klein, Liberty Collom, Wendy Czik, Rose Grenier, Erin Murphy, and Karl Kirchwey for their advice and support in helping us to imagine this summer program and to make it a reality. I am also very grateful to the NEH Distinguished Teaching Professorship Fund, which supports this program and the Health Humanities Project more generally.

We hope to run the Health Humanities Summer Research Fellows Program again in 2022 and look forward to the amazing projects our students will come up with! You can see more about the Health Humanities Project at BU on our website (<https://sites.bu.edu/healthhumanities/>).

Sincerely,

Anthony M. Petro
Associate Professor of Religion
and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies
NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor



MEET OUR 2021 FELLOWS



Maia Archer

Year: Junior

Major: Biology with
French and Public
Health Minor

Project: Efficiency vs. Equity: Should Language Matter? How the Prioritization of English in the Scientific Literary Community Adversely Affects Francophone African Countries.

A large number of reports of scientific research and medical literature are primarily written in English. Limitations in the absorption and application of research, due to the dominance of English, creates a high burden of disease in Francophone countries. Therefore, my research project discusses the equity of English in the science world and emphasizes the importance of diversifying and decolonizing scientific literature, focusing primarily on Francophone African countries. I present a historical analysis of how the language limitation in literature and research has indirectly and directly caused a disproportionate burden in healthcare within these regions and how this limitation has transpired in present times. My ultimate goal for my project is to generate conversation on the dissemination and application of scientific knowledge across the world.



Bella Faber-Rico

Year: Junior

**Major: Psychology
and Medical
Anthropology**

Project: Literary and media analysis of the cultural dynamics of queer body image in the COVID-19 pandemic

My project this summer focused on queer womanhood and body image in the COVID-19 pandemic. The stay-at-home measures America experienced over the last year have been accompanied by body image anxieties for many, driven in part by increased weight and fitness-related messaging. The increase in communication through social media that we saw during the pandemic has enabled this messaging and negativity, but has also increased representation of body diversity and created spaces for identity exploration, particularly when it comes to gender and sexuality. Looking at young queer women allows me to address how these new spaces have complicated cultural expectations around body image and presentation while also bringing my own community's narratives to light and filling gaps in eating disorder and body image research.



Malika Mouhmoud Kounkourou

Year: Senior

Major: International
Relations and Pre-
Med

Project: The relationship between poetry and healing, especially with trauma

When speaking with my father about the stories told to him of when his grandfather went to battle against imperial forces, my father mentioned that “between battles they would recite poetry to keep their hearts soft.” A large part of our culture, poetry was used to keep people sane and help them withstand the harsh realities of living in the Sahara. It was a form of therapy as much as it was entertainment and a means of cultural transmission. Beyond my own tribe, poetry is used by communities all over the world as a form of expression that heals. My project explores the healing power of poetry, especially in response to trauma, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how poetry is able to keep “hearts soft.” What is the psychology behind poetry therapy and how does this translate through individual and communal experiences?



Matias Latorre

Year: Junior

Major: Human

Physiology and

Medical Anthropology

Project: History and change in HIV/AIDS stigmatization of queer men from 1988–1992 in the United States

This summer I looked at the stigmatization of queer men within queer media and mass media sources between 1988–1992. In the mass media source, the New York Times, I found a connection between HIV/AIDS and death being drawn during the end of the 80's. At the beginning of the 90's there seemed to be a shift to a new connection: HIV/AIDS and queerness, specifically among gay men. Alternatively, in the queer media source, Out Magazine, there was a lot of rich discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS among all communities within the United States, such as injectable drug users and health workers. I hope to eventually continue this research to better frame my findings into a modern result of legislation and systemic biases that persist in the health care system, especially in the United States.



Jackson Rosette

Year: Junior

Major: English and
Anthropology

Project: Disease and the State, the Biopolitics of COVID-19

This project aims to use a reading of philosopher Michel Foucault's corpus, mainly *Discipline & Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, to conceptualize how the threat of disease was manifested in the United States. The implications of this analysis, which uses the COVID-19 Pandemic as a locus in the genealogy of the interactions between power and the body, speak to the fields of biomedicine and greater philosophical and anthropological questions. This research hopes to conceptualize how disease infects not only individual bodies but the greater organization of society, the "social body" as Foucault would have it.



Anvitha Sathya

Year: Senior

Major: Seven Year
Liberal Arts and
Medical Education

Project: Literary analysis of representations of mental health/illness in Asian communities, with a focus on gender

Mental illness, while starting to become more widely understood, has always been a source of stigma for those who suffer from its afflictions. While there are many studies about the generalized cause and treatment of these disorders, the individual experience of these disorders is often overlooked, especially in Asian communities. As a Health Humanities fellow, I studied the response to mental illness in Asian communities in which the stigma towards diagnosis and acceptance is still heightened. In order to study these topics, I read a collection of novels written by Asian women between 1999 and 2020 in which the main conflict revolves around mental illness. By using novels in order to study the healthcare system's treatment of mental health and the individual experience, I hope to gain insight in the healthcare system's capability for change and adaptability.



David Winner

Year: Junior

Major: Philosophy
and Russian Language
& Literature

Project: Drawing on Hannah Arendt's “banality of evil” to analyze U.S. media responses to mass shootings.

In her 1963 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt coins the controversial phrase “the banality of evil.” She writes that Adolf Eichmann, an SS officer who managed the transportation apparatus of the Holocaust, was an “average, ‘normal’ person, neither feeble-minded nor indoctrinated nor cynical,” yet was nevertheless “perfectly incapable of telling right from wrong.” In my research, I argue for a nontraditional reading of Arendt's “banality of evil.” I then use that reading to critique the tendency of American mass media to pathologize mass murderers.



Sharon Zhang

Year: Junior

Major: Health

Sciences with English
and French Minors

Project: Rise in hate crimes against Asian/Asian-Americans during COVID19

My project looks at hate crimes against the Asian American community in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the attacks against harmless Asian American elders to the breaking news of the recent shooting in Atlanta, the media has been filled with stories of Asian Americans being brutally victimized. To explore the social and cultural impacts on this rise in hatred against the Asian American community, I draw from firsthand experiences of the Asian American community through the literature, art, and poetry that they have created. Moreover, I explore the harmful effects of such a stereotypical expectation placed on a minority group.

MEET OUR GRADUATE ADVISORS



Nicholas Covaleski

Nicholas is going into his third year as a doctoral student in the Department of Religion. Interested broadly in the intersections of religion and health, his current research focuses on the relationship between secularism, religion, and ethics in the context of Western biomedicine, especially in regards to mental health, global health, and emerging biotechnologies. Nicholas holds Masters degrees from Harvard Divinity School and Harvard Medical School.

Tyler J. Fuller

Tyler J. Fuller is a Ph.D. student training as a socio-cultural scholar of religion and public health. His research interests focus on lived religion, narrative, and collective memory in relation to health-seeking behaviors and faith-based health education and promotion. He is currently working on a project examining Catholic experiences of watching religious services online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tyler earned his MTS and MPH from Emory University.



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR WONDERFUL FACULTY MENTORS!

Maja Carrion

Professor Maja Carrion has led and managed public health projects and research in Asia, Africa, South America, Europe, and the US. Her primary research interests are innovative infectious disease surveillance, screening and treatment programs, disease and vector control, and neglected tropical diseases.



Merav Shohet

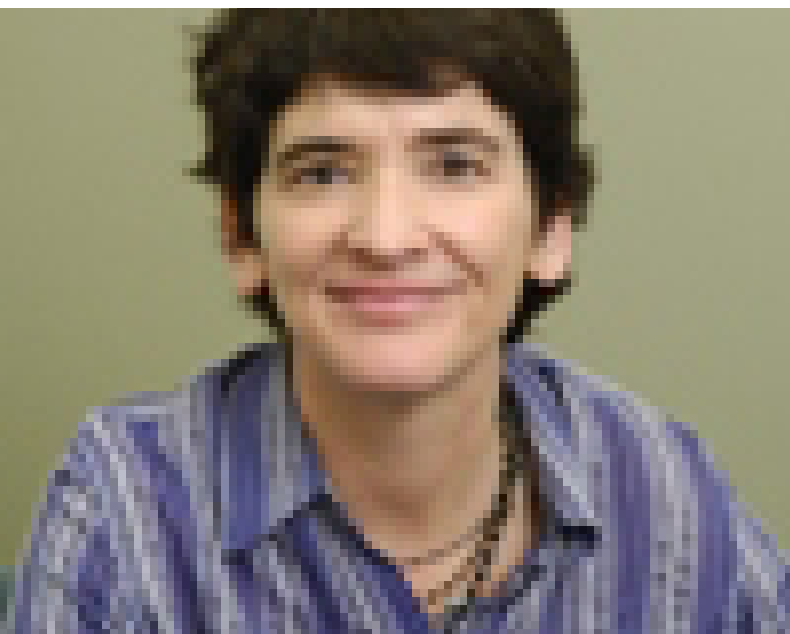
Dr. Merav Shohet is a cultural anthropologist whose specializations in psychological, medical, and linguistic anthropology lead to ethnographically grounded, comparative, language-centered research on affect, morality, and health. In both Vietnam and North America, she focuses on the subjective, emotional lives of specific persons to illuminate how discursive practices – and the socio-historical and political-economic transformations of which they are a part – mediate individuals' experiences of moral personhood and lived possibilities in extra-clinical contexts of care-giving, suffering and recovery.

Noor Hashem

Dr. Noor Hashem She holds an MFA in Fiction and PhD in English Literature from Cornell University. She was a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University from 2014-2016. Her research examines the intersection of Muslim literature, North American ethnic literature, and world literature through the lenses of critical theory, cultural studies, and gender studies.



Dr. Noor Hashem



Paula Hennessey

Dr. Paula Hennessey is a Senior Lecturer in French at BU. She completed her undergraduate studies (majoring in French) at Wellesley College and pursued her graduate studies in French Literature at Brown University. She studied at the Université Paris-Sorbonne; taught at Lycée Descartes in Paris, at Brown University, MIT and BU.

Marie McDonough

As a scholar of broad interests, Dr. Marie McDonough's academic lectures and presentations have addressed such topics as war trauma and ritual storytelling, the philosophers Stanley Cavell and Michel Foucault, themes of justice in Latina/o comics, the ethics and poetics of AIDS memoirs, the films of Pedro Almodóvar, and other subjects in literature, philosophy, gender studies, media studies, and cultural studies.



Susanne Sreedhar

Dr. Susanne Sreedhar teaches in the Department of Philosophy and in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program. Her research focuses on early modern political thought. Sreedhar's first book, *Hobbes on Resistance: Defying the Leviathan*, came out with Cambridge University Press in 2010. Her second book, provisionally titled *Hobbes on Sex*, is under contract with Oxford University Press.

