Applications for the 2021 Cohort are due on October 12, 2020

For information about the Paul Peck Humanities Institute at Montgomery College, the Smithsonian Faculty Fellowships, and how to apply, visit us at: www.montgomerycollege.edu/humanities

Faculty! Submit your application for this rewarding academic professional development opportunity.

Facing the Complex, Multiple Challenges of the 21st Century
2021 MC-Smithsonian Faculty Fellowship Program
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Deadline for Applications: October 12, 2020

As the New Year’s Eve ball slowly descended from atop One Times Square at the start of this year, thousands watched from below, joined digitally by a billion more from across the globe. They bade farewell to 2019—looking forward to a bright new year, 2020. They watched with expectation, and with hopes for a prosperous and healthy New Year. Many economies were booming, jobs in the U.S. were increasingly plentiful, and families prepared for return to work and school, after a routine holiday break.

Far across the world, Chinese officials had already confirmed dozens of cases of a deadly and mysterious new pneumonia. First, eastward into Europe and, then, westward towards the Americas, the virus, carried by—and within—humans, reached every continent, save one, Antarctica. Three short months later, city streets across the globe emptied, and hospital beds filled. A one hundred-year, black swan event, the pandemic changed nearly everything about our lives—how (or even if) we work, how we shop, eat, learn, travel and socialize. Nothing was normal; nothing felt routine.

In the early months of this global pandemic, more than 141,000 Americans have died, with a predicted tens of thousands more to follow. Masks and social distancing are the norm, except where they are not. Amidst the social and economic misery, some posit that the pandemic offers us lessons to the complex, interconnected challenges of the 21st century—if only we will listen. Climate change, structural racism, the Covid-19 pandemic, economic, environmental or political dislocations, and environmental justice catastrophes are causing monumental disruptions to life as we know it—with the poor and disenfranchised often the easiest and most affected victims. These critical challenges require complex solutions, forged with open minds and a commitment to turning, in part, to lessons gleaned from the past. New Fellows will have the opportunity to choose one of these challenges to help enhance or refine their areas of study and expertise and to bring their knowledge and understanding to their students in varied and important ways.

Each of these humbling, 21st century challenges offer us the chance to be inventive and creative, even inspired, to make a difference. What will our responses be? What can history and science teach us? In the 2021 Fellowship, let’s open conversations between our professors and students with questions that have touched so many for so many months across so many of our disciplines. Let’s bring the challenges of these crises into our virtual—and, hopefully, in time, face to face—classrooms and attempt to generate thoughtful and meaningful responses and actions.

For guidance, Smithsonian Faculty Fellows can turn to the world’s largest museum and research complex, the Smithsonian Institution, whose objects, exhibits, and experts hopefully will help us shape effective and lasting solutions. In the special circumstances presented by the pandemic, museums are shuttered or offering reduced access. MC’s own response for spring classes is unknown, but the MC-Smithsonian Faculty Fellowship will prevail, despite these hurdles. We have already planned virtual meetings with curators and educators to prepare our fellows to lead MC students toward the future. Lonnie G. Bunch III, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, describes how the Smithsonian’s job is to find the “tension between technology and (the) traditional. This is a time that encourages us to think about things differently because the country will never be the same.”

Indeed, the Smithsonian’s work to expand access to its digital content is vast and increasingly relevant to our teaching. Our professors and students will be introduced to virtual and real exhibits, museums, and data from the Smithsonian’s vast resources, including the Smithsonian Learning Lab. Together, we will promote integrative learning and teaching at Montgomery College to enrich the lives of our students in new, different, and meaningful ways.

Consider becoming a part of this journey, shared by 214 MC professors and more than 20,000 of our students, their families and friends who have benefited from this Fellowship experience. Communicate with your department chair to assure a teaching schedule that allows you to devote all Thursday afternoons in fall and spring semester of calendar year 2021 to the Fellowship.

To learn more, please visit www.montgomerycollege.edu/humanities or contact:
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