

School of Liberal Arts awarded prestigious grant from Mellon Foundation for Sawyer Seminars

November 09, 2020 12:15 PM Matt Roberts
mrobert1@tulane.edu



Art history professors Adrian Anagnost and Mia Bagneris (pictured above) co-organized “Sites of Memory: New Orleans and Place-based Histories in the Americas,” which will examine how myth and memory inform contested sites of public history, such as plantations, historic houses, monuments and memorials. The sessions are part of the Sawyer Seminars, which Tulane last hosted in 2001. (Photo provided by Arielle Pentes)

The School of Liberal Arts was awarded a \$225,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to convene a year-long site-specific inquiry exploring changing

historical narratives in New Orleans and the greater Gulf South region.

“Sites of Memory: New Orleans and Place-based Histories in the Americas,” co-organized by art history professors Adrian Anagnost and Mia Bagneris, will examine how myth and memory inform contested sites of public history, such as plantations, historic houses, monuments and memorials. Through a series of interdisciplinary sessions, participants will ask how memory work rooted in New Orleans overlaps with memorialization happening in former slavery-based economies, including port cities and immigrant hubs.

The seminar also engages scholars based in other cities to explore varied approaches to public history and collective memory across the Americas to understand New Orleans’ layered histories through a new lens.

The highly regarded Sawyer Seminars were established in 1994 to provide support for comparative research on the historical and cultural sources of contemporary developments. Tulane last hosted a Sawyer Seminar in 2001.

“Building on our already profound relationship to New Orleans and the Gulf South region is a key goal for the School,” said Brian Edwards, dean of the School of Liberal Arts. “By showing us new ways to understand monuments and historic sites, our faculty are taking a long view on a much discussed and debated topic, offering the insights of comparative interdisciplinary research, and reflecting our deep commitment to community-engaged scholarship.”

The grant will fund a new postdoctoral fellowship and two fellowships for advanced PhD students, as well as costs associated with the year-long seminar. In addition to attending the public programs of the Sawyer Seminar sessions, participating Tulane students will engage relevant topics in weekly class meetings and in additional field trips and activities. The seminar series will launch in fall 2021.



(Brazil, 2014) At the edge of Rio de Janeiro's "Little Africa" neighborhood, a monument to 19th-century railway industrialist Baron Mauá has been removed while developers build Santiago Calatrava's Museum of Tomorrow and a new monorail for the 2014 Olympics. The site will be discussed in the seminar series. (Photo by Adrian Anagnost)