

How creativity can battle pollution

March 18, 2015 12:00 PM Claire Davenport
newwave@tulane.edu



In the Qatar Ballroom of the Lavin-Bernick Center, social scientist Toby Miller gives a talk on the relationship between creativity, the humanities and the environment and how modern culture shapes the way we view these things. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

At first glance, liberal arts and pollution might seem unrelated, but [Toby Miller](#) thinks differently. In his speech at Tulane University on Monday (March 16), Miller emphasized the importance of creating a liberal arts program that focuses on fostering creativity in students to allow them to attack environmental issues.

“We need to reinvigorate and protect the humanities by making creativity an integral aspect of the liberal arts program,” said Miller, an interdisciplinary social scientist who is the author of more than 30 books including *Blow Up the Humanities*. He is a professor of journalism, media and cultural studies at Cardiff University in England, and the Sir Walter Murdoch Professor of Cultural Policy Studies at Murdoch University in Australia.

“The humanities are seen today as lesser, therefore serious changes need to be made to the humanities to save them and allow them to thrive,” he said.

Miller's talk, “Trashing the University to Save the Environment,” discussed the negative effects of electronic waste on the environment and how electronic pollution is a problem that can be battled with art and education. He sees the promotion of creativity as a viable way to slow down electronic-waste pollution.

“The artistic response to the problem is a viable solution for representing the issues in an understandable way,” Miller said.

His presentation included images of jewelry and sculptures made out of electronic waste and paintings that depicted rivers bogged down with trash ? art that raises awareness about e-pollution and promotes a way to turn excess electronic material into something useful.

The talk, which promoted student activism against the rise in electronic pollution and modern culture's reliance on technology, was organized through the [Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching](#) ? Social Innovation Engagement, the [Altman Program of International Studies and Business](#) and the [Center for Public Service](#) at Tulane.

“We need to make meaning out of culture, and we need this meaning to have positive effects,” he said.

Claire Davenport is a first-year student at Tulane University, majoring in English and political science.

“Creativity creates movements because it gives clarity to the truth.” —Toby Miller, social scientist