





“Seen from the vantage of the Franco Institute, the future of humanist inquiry, creative practice, and liberal arts research is vibrant and exciting, and our commitment to fostering this work — and to articulating its value in the public sphere — will grow with us.”

— Kate Marshall
Director, Franco Family Institute for
Liberal Arts and the Public Good

Building on a legacy begun more than 40 years ago with the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, the Franco Family Institute for Liberal Arts and the Public Good launched in 2025 in the College of Arts & Letters at the University of Notre Dame. The expanded vision continues support for research on enduring questions in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, while cultivating broader conversations on campus and beyond to articulate the public value of the humanities and liberal arts.

Letter from the director



It was a transformational year for the Franco Family Institute for Liberal Arts and the Public Good. Founded over 40 years ago as the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, the Franco Institute relaunched in April 2025 with an expanded mission. In 2025–26, the Institute continued its commitments to outstanding scholarship in the liberal arts in the form of grants for individual faculty and students for research, publication, and domestic and international conferences. The newly re-formed Institute extends that support to collaborative, global, and publicly engaged research and creative endeavor. The Franco Institute also celebrates and catalyzes humanist inquiry, building on Notre Dame’s foundational commitments to the humanities for a new era.

A gift of profound generosity and foresight from the Franco family facilitated this transformation, and the stories included here provide a glimpse of the remarkable work that faculty and students can achieve with committed funding and infrastructure for research and collaborations in the humanities and the liberal arts.

The Franco Institute now serves as a humanities center within the College of Arts & Letters at the University of Notre Dame, within the broader context of liberal arts research. Its grant programs reach out to students and faculty in the humanities, arts, and social sciences disciplines, and new Franco Institute-hosted programming at the University and in the South Bend region addresses enduring questions in contemporary and historical contexts. This year, the Franco Institute hosted scholars, artists, and public thinkers on the topic of “attention,” including *New York Times* critic Jason Farago and writer N. K. Jemisin, and we welcomed Jenny Odell, Vauhini Vara, Rainn Wilson, and Shankar Vedantam at our inaugural Day | Merton Symposium.

These events complemented research on the topic of attention, as well as undergraduate public humanities engagement featured in a student poster session held at the symposium. This year, the Institute facilitated its second year of interdisciplinary collaboratives, including labs on the topics of art and technology, modeling democracy, and motherhood and migration, and the Institute’s inaugural cohort of faculty fellows advanced projects in philosophy, anthropology, classics, and other subjects. A new program funded five interdisciplinary graduate projects on areas including biblical studies, poetry and sound, and race and environmental resilience. The plurality of topics, methodologies, and approaches to thought and work built a dynamic intellectual culture and, ultimately, an optimistic environment for scholars, students, and artists to thrive.

This year, the Franco Institute partnered with the Arts Initiative at Notre Dame to enhance support for creative work at individual and collaborative scales, highlighting the shared but distinct commitments of the arts and humanities. Faculty development programs also grew, from writing retreats, to publication subvention, to research development and events with university publishers and grant officers.

Seen from the vantage of the Franco Institute, the future of humanist inquiry, creative practice, and liberal arts research is vibrant and exciting, and our commitment to fostering this work — and to articulating its value in the public sphere — will grow with us.

Thank you for your support of the Franco Family Institute for Liberal Arts and the Public Good.

Kate Marshall

Director, Franco Family Institute for Liberal Arts and the Public Good
Thomas J. and Robert T. Rolfs College Professor of English
Associate Dean for Research and Strategic Initiatives, College of Arts & Letters
University of Notre Dame



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Examining timely and enduring questions

2025–26

Annual Research Theme: ATTENTION

This year, the Institute invited students, scholars, and local community members to take part in a yearlong discussion on the theme of “attention.” In addition to awarding annual research theme grants to graduate students and faculty, the Institute compiled an “attention syllabus” with recommended readings, facilitated theme-related public humanities research by undergraduates, organized a student research poster session, and hosted events on the research theme with engaging speakers including Jason Farago, Jenny Odell, Vauhini Vara, Shankar Vedantam, N.K. Jemisin, and Rainn Wilson.

The Franco Institute awarded 19 annual research theme grants to support research on attention by Notre Dame faculty and graduate students working in different disciplines, places, and time periods. Scholars in anthropology; art, art history, and design; English; peace studies; political science; psychology; Romance languages and literatures; sociology; and theology studied attention in diverse locales — including Kenya, Brazil, the Philippines, Mexico, Turkey, and Nepal — as well as South Bend. Several researchers studied the “attention economy” and how digital technologies — from TikTok to ChatGPT — reshape, fragment, or undermine our ability to focus. A few grantees are particularly interested in how these technologies (and conversely, chronic boredom) affect mental health and overall wellbeing. Other supported projects on the annual research theme showed that attention proves fundamental to practices of care, instruction, recognition, and cultural memory. With such varied examples as medicine, war memorials, moral parables, and artistic practice, these projects treat attention as a precious resource intentionally given to people, texts, and objects of exceptional significance.

Faculty grants

Ryan Carpenter (Psychology), *Examining the Role of Attention Dysregulation and Over-focus on Reward in Nonsuicidal Self-Injury as a Potentially Addictive Behavior*

Brad Gibson (Psychology), *Does Chronic Boredom Reflect Impaired Voluntary Control of Internal Attention?*

Jason Lahr (Art, Art History, and Design), *Doomscroller*

Alexi Orchard (Technology & Digital Studies), *Attention to Context: Toward Humanities-Led Expertise in Technology*

Johannes Ruhland (Romance Languages and Literatures), *Were Medieval French Historians Attention Seekers?*

Elyse Speaks (Art, Art History, and Design), *Natural Fictions*

Examining



My advice to museum directors and to people who work in museums is to look at the sort of decline of social media in the last year or two as a golden opportunity to rethink success and attention in ways that go beyond numerical likes and shares.”

— Jason Farago, *New York Times* critic

Graduate student grants

Ali Altiok (Peace Studies & Political Science), *Competing for Youth Attention in the Age of Political Disinformation: Experimental Evidence on the Capacity of Kenyan Youth to Detect Deepfake Image*

Prakash B K (Anthropology), *Attention, Caste, and the Moral Economy of Care in a Nepali Psychiatric Hospital*

Insha Bint Bashir (Anthropology), *Distributed Witness: Collective Attention and Memory Preservation in the Kashmiri Diaspora*

Tirna Chandra (English), *‘Her Happiness was a Solid, Tangible Thing’: Therapeutic Attention to the Non-Human in First World War Caregivers’ Narratives*

Gessica de Freitas (Political Science), *Electoral Attention and Accountability: Insights from Brazil in Comparative Perspective*

Lauren Garner (Psychology), *Short-form Videos and Meditation: Investigating the Acute Effect on Sustained Attention*

Melis Gemalmaz (Anthropology), *Attending to a Devastated World: Attention as a Spiritual and Ethical Practice in Post-earthquake Turkey*

Giulia Maria Gliozzi Wilkins (Romance Languages and Literatures), *Directing Attention: Italian Women’s Holocaust Testimonies and the Politics of Cultural Memory*

Abigail Hemmen (Political Science), *Starving Kids and Selfies: How the Presentation of News on Social Media Trivializes Politics*

Fabian Díaz Maldonado (Sociology), *‘Pay Attention to Us; We Matter’: How Polarization and Media Portrayals Shape Attention to Social Movements*

Jeremi Panganiban (Anthropology), *What Communities Notice: Local Knowledge and Coastal Change in the Philippines*

Aurora Roghair (Psychology), *Lead Exposure and ADHD Development*

Jorge Manuel Arredondo Sevilla (Romance Languages and Literatures), *What Remains When We Attend: Indigenous Life, Language, and Memory in Jesús del Monte*

The work of art in the age of mechanical distraction

Unsurprisingly, artists took particular interest in this year’s research theme. Given this shared investment in cultivating and understanding attention, the Franco Institute partnered with the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art and the Notre Dame Arts Initiative to host the *New York Times* art critic Jason Farago on campus in February. Over lunch with students and in a community lecture, Farago encouraged curiosity and focus, even when the outcome of this effort remains uncertain. Farago highlighted the impact social media and smartphones have had on the experience of viewing art, noting that the psychological threat to deep looking is not the total hours spent on devices, but the constant frequency of interruption. Drawing from historical examples connecting attention to intention, Farago said, “that Enlightenment understanding of being attentive to the natural world was not only something you learned, it was something you did.” Despite the ways that new technologies might be harnessed to create art, Farago called for the audience to maintain critical distance to metrics like “success” and “impact” and retain time and space for undistracted encounters.

It was exciting to hear from someone who has so successfully integrated a passion for art and the liberal arts into a journalism career.”

— Olivia Schmitt, Notre Dame undergraduate

How Should We Hold ATTENTION? Day | Merton Symposium

Named for two of the foremost socially engaged Catholic thinkers of the 20th century, the Dorothy Day & Thomas Merton Culture and the Public Good Symposium centers on a timely and enduring question related to the annual research theme. This year, the symposium included a student poster session featuring Franco-sponsored research on the annual theme and four guest speakers who responded to the question, “How should we hold attention?”

The writer and artist Jenny Odell spoke from her experience advocating for shared natural spaces in the San Francisco Bay Area. Much like her fellow guest speaker, actor and author Rainn Wilson, Odell argued that attention is a vital component of love, compassion, and care. Social scientist, author, and podcaster Shankar Vedantam framed attention as an invaluable human capacity threatened by modern distractions, while journalist and author Vauhini Vara guided the audience through the creation of an “attention machine” as a foil to the distraction machines we carry every day, inviting us all to notice what we appreciate in moments of stillness and focus.



“We have a very short amount of time on the planet. We need to figure out how we’re going to deploy this tiny, precious resource we have.”

—Shankar Vedantam



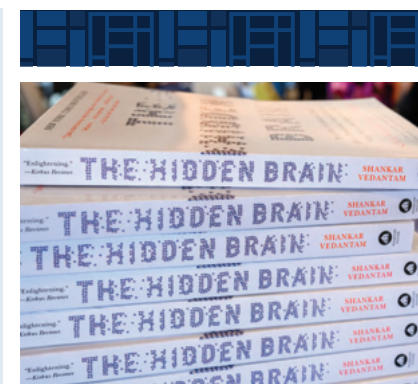
“This attention to compassion lets us radiate that compassion outwards to reduce the suffering of others.”

— Rainn Wilson



“It’s not actually that we can’t pay close attention anymore; it’s just that we don’t.”

— Vauhini Vara



“We don’t need to learn to be bored again. We need to learn how to be interested.”

— Jenny Odell

Building scholarly community and collaboration



The rich exchange of ideas at the Franco Humanities Fellows Workshop has contributed to the cultivation of a vibrant academic community at Notre Dame."

— Liang Cai, Ruth and Paul Idzik Associate Professor in Digital Scholarship



Franco Humanities Fellows

In fall 2025, the Franco Institute welcomed its first cohort of faculty humanities fellows. These fellowships allow Notre Dame faculty to devote full-time effort to research and writing while providing a forum for discussing their works in progress. Each of this year's fellows came from a distinct discipline, studying topics widely varied in time and place, from ancient Rome and imperial China to present-day Kenya and Chicago. Despite — and perhaps because of — these notable differences in methodology and focus, the fellows workshop series spurred robust scholarly exchanges. Joined by external reviewers from 11 other universities, including Cornell, Chicago, UC Berkeley, NYU, and Oxford, fellows brought the insights of their particular subfields to bear on the works in progress of their colleagues, expanding the audience and impact for each scholar's research.



2025–26 Franco Humanities Fellows

Christopher Abram (English), *Inventing Beowulf: Innovation and Tradition in the Post-Medieval Poem*.

Liang Cai (History), *Convict Politics: From Utopia to Serfdom in Early China*

Alex E. Chávez (Anthropology), *Sound City: Place, Poiesis, Xicago*

Debra Javeline (Political Science), *Merit and My Kid*

Brian Krostenko (Classics), *Poetry and Social Class in 2nd c. Roman Italy: The Dedication of the Faliscan Cooks and Other Poems*

Ann Mische (Sociology and Peace Studies), *Futures in Contention: Public Scenarios and Transformative Politics in the Global Arena*

Michael Rea (Philosophy), *Love, Beauty, and Objectification*



Research Innovation Collaboratives

The Research Innovation Collaboratives program supports groups of scholars pursuing a core question or topic from transdisciplinary perspectives. Since its inception, the program has fostered high-impact research, art, teaching, and outreach, deepening connections across institutions and departments, and bringing the insights of the liberal arts to public life. Franco-funded collaboratives have created such impactful projects as film and public art to reflect the history of race and sport in South Bend, workshops to analyze and document experiences of obstetric violence among immigrants, and forums for studying the work of translation across languages and genres.

2025–26 Research Innovation Collaboratives

African Governance: Bernard Forjwuor (Africana Studies)

Carceral Studies: Anna Haskins (Sociology) and Pam Butler (Gender Studies)

Critical Approaches to Art and Technology: Cecilia Kim (Film, Television, and Theatre) and David Bird (Music)

Dynamic Translations: Clíona Ní Ríordáin (English) and Johannes Göransson (English)

Foundry Field: Clinton Carlson (Art, Art History, and Design) and Katherine Walden (American Studies)

Generative AI: Tom Stapleford (Program of Liberal Studies) and Patrick Gamez (Reilly Center for Science, Technology, and Values)

Modeling Democracy with AI: Michael Coppedge (Political Science) and John Behrens (Technology & Digital Studies Program)

Motherhood and Migration Stories: Vanesa Miseres (Romance Languages and Literatures) and Vania Smith-Oka (Anthropology)

Representation of Women: Christina Wolbrecht (Political Science) and Lakshmi Iyer (Economics)

Social Health Dynamics: Molly Copeland (Sociology) and Ryan Carpenter (Psychology)

Graduate Working Groups

Franco Graduate Working Groups support doctoral students in the College of Arts & Letters exploring topics collaboratively through interdisciplinary perspectives over the course of an academic year. Students expand their scholarly networks, engaging scholars at other universities and community partners, and deepen their understanding of a topic through collaboration and dialogue. In 2025–26, the Institute funded five Graduate Working Groups pursuing topics as varied as poetry, Biblical studies, and environmental justice. With Franco Institute support, these students have hosted reading groups, workshops, guest speakers, and symposia.

2025–26 Franco Graduate Working Groups

Approaching and Teaching Racial and Environmental Resilience

Westin Smith and María Alejandrina Tinta Segovia (Romance Languages and Literatures)

The Inspiration of Scripture in Biblical Studies

Christopher Howard and Maria Sermersheim (Theology)

Poetry, Song, and Sound

Sarah Baber and Nidhi Surendranath (English)

Queer Studies

Hyunsoo Kim, Miranda Macfarlane, Charlie Serigne (English), and Pixie Shen (Philosophy)

Women Between the Church and Academy

Theresa Rice (Theology) and Ciara O'Rourke (Philosophy)

Building

Promoting transformative partnerships



Notre Dame Arts Initiative

Over the past year, the Franco Institute has developed a particularly fruitful partnership with the Notre Dame Arts Initiative, which “brings together the people and programs of the University’s extended arts community to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and define the arts as central to campus and community life.” In addition to co-sponsored programming, professional development opportunities for students, and 25 Small Creative and Performing Arts Grants (up to \$4,000 each), this joint effort awarded four Large Creative and Performing Arts Grants (up to \$25,000 each) to Notre Dame faculty in 2025–26.

Large Creative and Performing Arts Grants

David Bird (Music), *Hinterlands* album release

Roy Scranton (English), *Popeye: An American Odyssey*

Rodrigo Lara Zendejas (Art, Art History, and Design), *Solo Exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum of Indianapolis*

Lida Zeitlin-Wu (Film, Television, and Theatre), *How Color Became a Technology: The Making of Chromatic Capitalism*

An Evening with N. K. Jemisin

Partnering with the Creative Writing Program and the music venue Stockroom East in South Bend, the Franco Institute hosted a fireside chat with author N.K. Jemisin in spring 2026. Facilitated by Institute director Kate Marshall and professor Cham Moore of Butler University, this wide-ranging conversation probed the nature of sci-fi and fantasy, the relevance of genre itself, and Jemisin’s creative practice. Jemisin shared that engaging with a variety of media makes her a better writer. In fact, while critics have often described Jemisin’s work as science fiction and fantasy, she resists applying such labels to her own writing. “I don’t draw lines. Period,” she said. “I constantly remind myself that genre lines are marketing distinctions. Science fiction is just the vehicle I’ve found to tell my stories.”



“Art is an urge to create. It is not bound by medium.”

— N.K. Jemisin



Undergraduate Public Humanities Internships

Launched in 2025, the Undergraduate Public Humanities Internship program connects students in the humanities with community organizations, such as the Studebaker National Museum and the Boys & Girls Clubs, and publications like *Commonweal* magazine, for a semester of experiential learning and research. Working with their host organization and sponsored by the Franco Institute, student interns undertake work in public history, ethnography, journalism, and community art. The semester-long experience culminates in a poster presentation at the annual Day | Merton Symposium in April.



2025–26 Undergraduate Public Humanities Interns

Elizabeth Coleman (Psychology, Pre-Health) with Reins of Life

Eric Derr (Program of Liberal Studies) with the Studebaker National Museum

Aubrey Keegan (Sociology) with United Youth Theatre

Jun Wei Lee (History) with La Casa de Amistad

James Thompson (Sociology) with *Commonweal* magazine

Jasmine Williams (Psychology) with Boys & Girls Clubs of the Northern Indiana Corridor

Rain Zhang (Medieval Studies) with *Commonweal* magazine



Promoting

Cultivating global networks



Global Micro-Residencies

The Franco Institute sponsors residencies abroad of up to two weeks for liberal arts scholars to enhance international collaboration and expand the reach of faculty research. Launched in early 2026, this program has funded scholarly exchanges with universities from Mexico City and Toronto to Sydney and Beijing.

2025–26 Global Micro-Residency Grants

- Pedro Aguilera-Mellado** (Romance Languages and Literatures) to Universidad Iberoamericana (Mexico City, Mexico)
- Kraig Beyerlein** (Sociology) to University of Toronto (Toronto, Canada)
- David Bird** (Music) to University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (Graz, Austria)
- Katie Bugyis** (Program of Liberal Studies) to University of Cambridge (Cambridge, UK)
- Laura Callahan** (Philosophy) to University of Oxford (Oxford, UK)
- Ying (Alison) Cheng** (Psychology) to London School of Economics and Political Science (London, UK)
- Eileen Hunt** (Political Science) to Australian Catholic University (North Sydney, Australia)
- Paul Scherz** (Theology) to Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (Santiago, Chile)
- Deborah Tor** (History) to University of Oxford (Oxford, UK)
- Sophie White** (American Studies) to University of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, UK)
- Johnny Zhang** (Psychology) to Beijing Normal University (Beijing, China)

International Scholarly Conferences

Through its Henkels grant programs and conference-planning services, the Franco Institute fosters global scholarly dialogue that advances cutting-edge scholarship in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. This year, the Institute hosted six international academic conferences in Beijing, London, Rome, and Jerusalem covering such varied topics as Confucianism, African governance, and Renaissance theology. The Institute also sponsored or co-sponsored some 50 events on Notre Dame’s campuses in Indiana and around the world and supported international conference travel for 55 faculty in the College of Arts & Letters.

Large Henkels Grants

- Supporting events led by Notre Dame faculty (up to \$25,000)
- Steven Alvarado** (Sociology), *Migration Research Conference*
 - Kimberly Belcher** (Theology), *The Work of Human Hands: Timely and Timeless*
 - Michael Coppedge** (Political Science), *International Conference on AI-Driven Modeling and Forecasting for Democratic Development and Decline* (AIM4D Conference),
 - Jennie Grillo** (Theology), *Embodiment and Affect in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*
 - Mary Celeste Kearney** (Film, Television, and Theatre), *100 Years Strong But Forever 16: Reclaiming and Expanding Teen Entertainment History*
 - Brian Krostenko** (Classics), *Politics, Power, and Rhetoric in the Generation before Cicero*
 - Nicholas Lombardo** (Theology), *The Holy Spirit and the Trinity: The Idea of a Circular Procession*
 - Gabriel Radvansky** (Psychology), *Event Cognition Conference*
 - Clíona Ní Riordáin** (English), and **Brandon Menke** (English), *What Miracle: New Revelations on the Prose Poem*
 - Victoria Tin-bor Hui** (Political Science), *The Rise and Fall—and Resilience—of Christian Churches and Civil Society in Hong Kong and in Exile*

Fostering new knowledge



Faculty Research Grants

The Franco Institute awarded more than 200 grants to faculty during the 2025–26 academic year. In addition to the large grants listed here, 65 small grants (up to \$5,000) were awarded in support of faculty research, creative work, and professional development.

Large Research Grants

- Muna Adem** (Sociology), *When Is Catastrophic Harm Publicly Recognized?: Immigration Enforcement and (Non) Eventfulness*
- Kaylin Hill** (Psychology), *Neuroscience for the Public Good: Supporting First-Time Parents*
- Essaka Joshua** (English), *Disability and Romantic Theatre 1780-1840*
- Cheng Liu** (Psychology), *Emerging Pathways for Next-Generation STEM Education: Applications of Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Computing for Cognitive Diagnosis*
- Abigail Ocobock** (Sociology), *The Uncoupling of Identity and Behavior: A Longitudinal Study of Bisexuality*
- Guillermo Trejo** (Political Science), *Where Are the Good Samaritans in Violent Democracies?: Designing and Evaluating a Citizen-Led Public Campaign to Stimulate Empathy and Solidarity with 2,000 Victims of Enforced Disappearance in Acapulco, Mexico*

Student Research Grants

This year, the institute made 176 grants to support student-led research in the arts, humanities, and social sciences at Notre Dame. These undergraduate and graduate grants support a wide range of scholarly work, including visits to archives and libraries, data collection, human subjects research, and conference travel.

2025–26 Graduate Student Research Awards

- | | |
|---|--|
| Jorge Manuel Arredondo Sevilla (Theology) | Han Jiang (Sociology) |
| Thomas Avery (Classics) | Sophie King (Classics) |
| Prakash B K (Anthropology) | Matthew Klem (Theology) |
| Kiana Bates (Art, Art History, and Design) | Yeonsuk Lee (Anthropology) |
| Miguel Blacutt Woolgar (Psychology) | Xinyue Liu (Anthropology) |
| Matthew Coetzee (Sociology) | Bruce McCuskey (Philosophy) |
| Sarah DeMarais (Theology) | Kaylee McEllin (Psychology) |
| Mara Egeler (Psychology) | Alejandro Mejía Andrade (Art, Art History, and Design) |
| Avery Encalade (Psychology) | Elsa Mueller (Anthropology) |
| Daniel Fajardo Gomez (Art, Art History, and Design) | Kushal Nandwani (History) |
| Barbara Formaggio Domingues (Anthropology) | Xinran Niu (Psychology) |
| Amira Freeman (History) | Nipunika Oshadhie Lecamwasam (Anthropology) |
| Yu Gao (Art, Art History, and Design) | Sunghyun Park (Anthropology) |
| Allison Hainstock (Economics) | Daniela Parra (Psychology) |
| Nurullah Hergul (History) | Tobias Pydych (Sociology) |
| Zhemín Huang (Sociology) | Helen Quah (English) |
| | Kenadi Silcox (Sociology) |
| | En-Ya Tsai (Sociology) |
| | Yunyan Zhao (Psychology) |

Cultivating

Fostering



Publishing workshop with leading university presses

The Franco Institute welcomed Fred Appel from Princeton University Press, Theo Calderara from Oxford University Press, and Erica Wetter from Stanford University Press to Notre Dame's campus in fall 2025 for individual consultations with faculty and a panel session open to graduate students, faculty, and postdoctoral fellows. The three editors offered advice on helping research projects find a publisher and an audience. Perin Gürel, associate professor of American studies, called the event “a valuable and streamlined experience for scholars in the College of Arts & Letters. The individual meetings were absolutely priceless — timed perfectly for us to relate the project and evaluate matching vision and work styles.”

“Being able to discuss my book project with acquiring editors from some of the leading university presses in the humanities, in an invitingly familiar setting here at Notre Dame, was an immeasurably beneficial opportunity for me as a junior faculty member facing this process for the first time.”

— Brandon Menke,
assistant professor of English

Faculty publication grants

To elevate the visibility and impact of the liberal arts, the Franco Institute awarded 14 grants to support editing, imaging, indexing, and subventions for faculty publications in 2025–26. In addition to these grants, the Institute also awarded seven Expanding Research Access Grants to support open access publishing, translations, and diverse scholarly products designed to expand the reach of scholarly research to the wider public.

2025–26 Expanding Research Access Grants

Christina Bambrick (Political Science), *Constitutionalizing the Private Sphere: A Comparative Inquiry*

Joris Geldhof (Theology), *Monotheism in Christian Liturgy*

Sean Griffin (German, Slavic, and Eurasian Studies), *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus*

Perin Gürel (American Studies), *Türkiye, Iran, and the Politics of Comparison*

Vanesa Miseres (Romance Languages and Literatures), *Mujeres en Tránsito: Viaje, Identidad y Escritura en Sudamérica (1830-1910)*

George Sikharulidze (Film, Television, and Theatre), *Wish I Didn't Know Now, What I Didn't Know Then*

Tom Stapleford (Program of Liberal Studies), *The Historical Epistemology of Economics*



Faculty Writing Retreats

The Franco Institute hosts three faculty writing retreats each academic year in August, January, and June. The Franco Institute provides dedicated time, space, structure, and food to allow faculty to devote their full focus to writing projects for four days. In 2025–26, 48 faculty from 16 different departments participated in a Franco Institute writing retreat.

Dissertation Fellows

Through its Dissertation Fellows program, the Franco Institute helps outstanding graduate students make significant progress on their dissertations. Fellows meet together on select Fridays throughout the spring semester to set writing goals and then use the time and space provided by the Institute to work.

Desheng Huang (Sacred Music), *Interpreting Bach's St. John Passion: A Conductor's Guide to Historical Context, Theological Significance, and Performance Practice*

Seham Kafafi (Psychology), *EEG Oscillations of Successful Memory Encoding for Emotional and Non-Emotional Stimuli*

Rebecca Cobern Kates (Philosophy), *Emotions and the Ethics of Perception*

Kelly Klee (Theology), *From Nature-Grace to Liberation-Salvation: Genealogy and Originality of Gustavo Gutiérrez's Liberation Theology*

W. S. Kombian (Philosophy), *Extending Rawlsian Principles of Justice to Climate Justice: Toward a Normative Foundation for Global Climate Action*

Miranda Macfarlane (English), *Neuroqueer Romanticism(s)*

Janie Jae eun Park (Psychology), *Parenting under Intimate Partner Violence: A Thematic Analysis of Pregnant Mothers' Narratives of Strengths and Challenges and a Path Analysis of the Role of Maternal Resilience in Parenting Confidence*

Keri Porter (Anthropology), *Navigating Urbanization: Interpersonal Violence in the Early Bronze Age Southern Levant*

Manuel Rodriguez (Sociology), *Friend or Foe? Religion and Ethnicity's Role in Latinx Americans' Attitudes Towards Immigration in the United States*

Townsend Rowland (History and Philosophy of Science), *Supplementation, Radiation, Mutation: Food and Scientific Authority in Postwar America*

“The four days of calm, focused work were invaluable for helping push through some tough spots in the chapter and work on getting it in polished-enough shape to share. I feel focused and energized for writing in the semester ahead.”

— January faculty writing retreat participant

Advancing

By the numbers

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

49 

SPONSORSHIPS/ CO-SPONSORSHIPS awarded for conferences and events in 2025-26

RESEARCH FUNDING

92 **UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GRANTS** in 2025-26

84 **GRADUATE STUDENT GRANTS** in 2025-26

11 **GLOBAL MICRO-RESIDENCY GRANTS** awarded to support international exchanges among faculty

10 **DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS** in 2025-26

17 **RESEARCH INNOVATION COLLABORATIVES** awarded since 2024

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

55 

GRANTS to support faculty participation in international academic conferences

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

261 

PEOPLE at the Day | Merton Symposium 2026

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

40 

Franco-supported PERFORMANCES AND WORKS OF ART in 2025-26

People



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- Therese Blacketor, Student Grants Coordinator
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