

UW-Madison Faculty Receives Grant for Study of the Midwest's Formative Rivers in the Era of Climate Change

Madison, Wis. (January 29, 2018) – A project blending scholarly research and local activism along the rivers of the Midwest, led by a UW-Madison faculty member, is one of seven projects to be funded by the Humanities Without Walls Consortium, administered by the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. The three-year project *Hydrologies of the Anthropocene: Social Flows and Engineered Watersheds in the Great Lakes Basin* was awarded a \$138k grant and responds to the challenge for cross-institutional teams of faculty and graduate students to collaboratively pursue research topics related to "The Work of the Humanities in a Changing Climate."

A collaboration between UW-Madison Professor of Community and Environmental Sociology Samer Alatout, University of Illinois-Chicago Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and English Rachel Havrelock, and UW-Milwaukee Professor of Sociology and Urban Studies Jennifer Jordan, the project investigates the industries, investment, and remediation efforts taking place on the Chicago, Milwaukee, Wolf, and Menominee Rivers today, and the relationship of this contemporary work to the rivers' complicated pasts. Blending geographic, literary, historical, and ethnographic approaches, the project will illuminate the layered and often forgotten histories of the rivers and reveal the social paths of invisible contaminants, and present powerful examples of how decisions regarding development, commodification, and remediation have shaped geography and riverine communities.

Funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and based at the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Humanities Without Walls aims to create new avenues for collaborative research, teaching, and the production of scholarship in the humanities, forging and sustaining areas of inquiry that cannot be created or maintained without cross-institutional cooperation. The Humanities Without Walls Consortium links humanities centers, including the UW-Madison Center for the Humanities, at 15 research universities throughout the Midwest and beyond.

The faculty members and supporting graduate student researchers working on *Hydrologies of the Anthropocene* will read planning proposals, analyze archival records, and interview residents along the rivers, developing together a set of narratives that are largely missing from the ongoing debates about what to do with precious fresh water in the face of climate change. The researchers will visit rivers throughout the Midwest and host town-hall meetings to better understand tribal, state, and federal attitudes toward activities along the river.

Outcomes of the project will include academic journal articles and a book project. In addition to sharing findings and information on a forthcoming website, the group aims to provide a platform for community groups currently excluded from the processes of river planning.

More information:

- <http://www.humanitieswithoutwalls.illinois.edu/initiatives/changing-climate/currentprojects.html>
- <http://humanities.wisc.edu/research/humanities-without-walls>