

*Institute for Research in the Humanities*  
*(IRH)*

*Presents*

**HOW? Research Methods in the Humanities**

*a panel to launch the exciting events of the IRH for  
the 2011-2012 academic year*

**Monday, September 12, 2011**

**3:00 - 5:00pm**

**212 University Club Building**  
432 East Campus Mall

Open to all interested faculty and students

**Panelists:** Panelists have been asked to address, in informal presentations of 7-10 minutes, specific and general issues about research methods in the humanities. They are free to focus on their work, their particular disciplines, or the humanities in general.

**Lee Palmer Wandel**, Professor of History

**Mara Loveman**, Associate Professor of Sociology

**Jon McKenzie**, Associate Professor of English

**Patricia Rosenmeyer**, Professor of Classics

The Institute for Research in the Humanities (IRH) will begin its year-long weekly seminars with a panel discussion on research methods in the humanities. The panel continues IRH's broad discussions about the humanities in the effort to understand the intellectual, ethical, and political underpinnings of what brings us together as a division of knowledge.

The seminar will open with brief presentations by the panelists, and then turn to a dialogue in which all Fellows and others are encouraged to participate. Throughout the year, we will return to these issues, expand on our understanding of how we do what we do as scholars in the humanities, and how the ways we work unite or differentiate us from scholars in other divisions of knowledge.

IRH Fellows are urged to attend; guests are welcome. Refreshments at 3:00-3:30 p.m. Seminar begins promptly at 3:30 p.m.

**Suggested provocations:** Please bring your own ideas, issues, and musings!

What are the distinctive ways in which we do our work as scholars in the humanities? How distinctive are those ways?

How do the ways we work impact our self-definition and how we represent the humanities to others inside and outside the academy?

What are the significant changes in research methods in the humanities in

the last decade? How have the changes affected what we produce as humanities knowledge? What are the underlying assumptions of those changes in research methods? Indeed, how have changes in such assumptions led to changes in research methods, what constitutes data, and how it is evaluated? What has been the impact of the new technologies on humanities research and how has humanities knowledge impacted those technologies (design, functionality, etc).

Interdisciplinarity has been with us for a while. What are the opportunities and challenges it poses for research methods in the humanities? Is there an “interdisciplinary method”? What are its features and how do we “put the features together coherently” in our scholarship, so located in particular disciplines as most of us are? How do we train graduate students in disciplines to be “interdisciplinary”? Formally? Informally?

On the sociology of research methods. Consider any or all of these: tenure-track and non-tenure-track, salaries, funding, fellowships, publishing (in its many forms!), tuition, class size, jobs... What bearing, if any, do these have on research methods (and the thinking about research methods) in the humanities? Do or should research methods have any bearing on them--those sociological factors--too?

Against method? A method clarifies and enables. If successful, it could also

be wildly self-conserving and self-reproducing. Is this good or bad? What should be our “best practice” attitude to a research method? Should we regard it more as contingent (existing and previous examples we could learn or unlearn from), or more as regulatory (a proven and settled way to get to a destination)?