Basic information about

Faculty Fellowships

2021-2022 Long-Term Projects

Louise W. and Edmund J.
KAHN LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTE

SMITH COLLEGE
Welcome to the Louise W. and Edmund J. Kahn Liberal Arts Institute

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute, which is your institute, established to advance faculty scholarship through collaborative research projects of broad intellectual scope.

The engine of every Kahn Institute project, short or long, is scholarly inquiry. Whether you are proposing a topic of your own or joining a project that is already in the planning stages, we encourage you to shape the project in ways that will advance your research and challenge you to think about it in new ways.

This handbook is designed to give you an overview of the Institute, to tell you a little about the kinds of projects it can support, and to provide you with some guidelines for participation. I’ll be happy to answer any questions that you may have. Please visit us online, at www.smith.edu/kahninstitute, or drop us a line any time.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Alexandra Keller
Director, Kahn Liberal Arts Institute
Table of Contents

About the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute .......................................................2
About Long-Term Projects ........................................................................2
Types of Faculty Fellowships .....................................................................4
Time Involved in a Fellowship ..................................................................4
Smith Staff Members Participating in Kahn Projects...............................5
How to Apply for a Fellowship.................................................................5
Application Deadline for Long-term Projects...........................................5
Benefits of Participating in a Long-term Project ........................................5
Visitors and Public Events ........................................................................6
2021-2022 Full-Year Project: Coping with Democratic Precarity and the Prospects for Democratic Renewal......................................................8
2021-2022 Full-Year Project: Democracies Redux: Resumptions, Resilience, Reconciliation, and Restoration..............................................................10
Planning Year Schedule Milestones ..........................................................12
Project Year Schedule Milestones .............................................................13
About the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute

The Louise W. and Edmund J. Kahn Liberal Arts Institute supports collaborative research among Smith and Five College faculty, students and visiting scholars without regard to the traditional boundaries of departments, programs and academic divisions.

The idea for such an institute was proposed by a group of faculty during Smith College’s 1997 self-study. It was envisioned as an innovative way to provide intellectual and physical space within the College for the scholarly development of the faculty. The Kahn’s founders believed that an imaginatively designed and managed Institute, outside the curriculum but creatively linked to it, would provide an ideal setting in which faculty, students and outside experts could collaborate on research projects of broad scope. They also saw an opportunity for a rich series of public events, presented in conjunction with Institute-based projects, that would enhance and bring greater vitality to the intellectual life of the College.

A generous bequest from Louise Wolff Kahn ’31 (1910-1995), which substantially augmented the Louise W. and Edmund J. Kahn Fund for Faculty Excellence, made it possible to establish the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute in early 1998. The Institute was housed on the third level of Neilson Library from 2000 to 2017. In summer 2017 the Institute moved to its new permanent location at 21 Henshaw Avenue.

Each year the Institute supports long-term and short-term projects that are proposed, planned and organized by faculty members. These projects are designed to foster communities of scholars in which all Fellows can participate as equals as they explore topics spanning a diverse range of scholarship in a collaborative and interdisciplinary setting. Participants, who are appointed as Fellows for the duration of a project, engage in its research program and also attend its meetings and special events.

About Long-Term Projects

Long-term projects extend over one semester or a full academic year. They are typically organized by one or two Smith College faculty members. They are designed to allow an interdisciplinary group of faculty and students to come together each week to share their individual research and to work collaboratively on a general theme reflecting the intersections of their shared interests.

Long-term projects center on a broad theme and a series of associated
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Long-term projects center on a broad theme and a series of associated questions that are framed in such a way that they are open to exploration from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, but that are sufficiently focused to sustain a coherent investigation over the course of an entire year.

These investigations can be inspired by many types of topics. Over the past 16 years, they have covered such wide-ranging subjects as exile, community activism, religious tolerance, democracy, biotechnology, urban life & development, deceit, climate change, marriage and divorce, war, refugees, time, fear, wellness and disease, women’s education, motherhood, and altering bodies and minds. Each project has included Faculty and Student Fellows from various departments and programs at Smith, as well as from the Five College community, and all have developed an exciting schedule of visitors and special events.

Although the topics and participants may be quite different from project to project, they all share two vital components: scholarship and fellowship. Scholarship is realized in many ways as a project progresses. One way is through the unique research of individual scholars. Another critical element of each project’s scholarship is its research colloquium. Each week, Project Fellows come together to discuss their research, critique one another’s work in progress, and share ideas and explore issues from the perspectives of their own disciplines and intellectual interests. Throughout the year, Project Fellows may also invite outside scholars, artists and other professionals to the College to meet with them and, in some cases, to present public lectures, performances, or other events.

The second essential ingredient of a Kahn project is fellowship. Fellowship is critical to building a community of scholars who can take advantage of the opportunities and challenges presented by an interdisciplinary inquiry conducted by students and faculty who are working together as peers. Building fellowship enables participants from widely varying disciplines to establish the communication and rapport that facilitates productive discussions and debates among them. It also helps Faculty and Student Fellows step beyond their
traditional classroom roles, dissolving the line between student and teacher to engage each other as equals and to work together productively. Fellowship is fostered at a weekly meal that takes place in conjunction with the colloquium session (the meal takes place either immediately before or after the meeting).

Types of Faculty Fellows

Three types of Faculty Fellows regularly participate in long-term projects.

Organizing Fellows are faculty who propose projects to the Institute’s Director. After a project is approved by the Director and the Advisory Board, the Organizing Fellows work with the Director to select Faculty and Student Fellows, to identify and invite visiting scholars and experts, and to prepare a program of public events related to the work of the project. Organizing Fellows are released from teaching one course to provide them with sufficient time to plan and lead their project.

Faculty Fellows are Smith College faculty members who participate in all activities in a long-term project. They assist the Organizing Fellows in selecting Student Fellows, identifying and inviting visitors, and planning events.

Visiting Fellows are faculty from institutions other than Smith who participate in long-term projects. Faculty from other colleges and universities follow the same application procedure and participate in projects in the same way as Smith faculty. They may be invited or appointed by the Institute’s Director on the advice of the Organizing Fellows.

All current Smith College faculty and emeritus/emerita faculty are eligible to be Fellows in long-term projects. Faculty from the Five Colleges and other institutions may also apply for fellowships, as may Smith College staff members. Each long-term project typically has approximately twelve Faculty Fellows and four Student Fellows.

Time Involved in Participating in a Fellowship

Faculty Fellows are appointed for the duration of their project. Throughout the project, the primary time commitment is three hours per week, two hours to attend the colloquium meeting and one hour for the meal. Faculty Fellows are also expected to attend public events, such as lectures or performances, organized by their project.
In addition, Faculty Fellows are asked to participate in two or three meetings during the “planning year,” the year before their project begins. During the planning year, Faculty Fellows meet to schedule their colloquium, as well as to help select their project’s Student Fellows. In the April before the project begins, all Fellows attend a kick-off welcome dinner. At that dinner, Faculty and Student Fellows meet one another for the first time to socialize and discuss readings, project visitors, and other topics about the shape and scope of their upcoming project.

**Smith Staff Members Participating in Kahn Projects**

All Smith staff members are invited to apply and participate in long-term Kahn Institute projects. Staff members must inform their departmental supervisors prior to applying for a Kahn project, and should discuss ramifications around the time commitment. Staff members’ participation in Kahn projects must be approved by departmental supervisors and by the Department of Human Resources.

**How to Apply for a Fellowship**

Faculty who are interested in applying for a fellowship in one of the 2021-2022 long-term projects at the Kahn Institute should begin by reading its project description. Descriptions of both long-term projects appear on pages 8-11 of this handbook; they are also available on the Kahn Institute Web site or they can be obtained upon request from the Institute’s office. Additional information about each project can also be obtained by contacting the Organizing Fellows or the Kahn Institute offices.

Faculty Fellowship applications can be submitted through the Kahn Institute Web site at [https://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute](https://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute). Links to the applications for the 2021-2022 long-term projects can be found on the Projects page, [https://www.smith.edu/academics/kahn-institute/projects](https://www.smith.edu/academics/kahn-institute/projects), (which also includes project descriptions), or apply online at: [https://form.jotform.com/KahnLiberalArtsInstitute/DemocraticPrecarityApp](https://form.jotform.com/KahnLiberalArtsInstitute/DemocraticPrecarityApp) or [https://form.jotform.com/KahnLiberalArtsInstitute/DemocraciesReduxApp](https://form.jotform.com/KahnLiberalArtsInstitute/DemocraciesReduxApp).

**Application Deadline for 2021-2022 Projects**

The deadline to apply for Faculty Fellowships in either of the Kahn Institute’s long-term projects for 2021-2022, *Coping with Democratic Precarity* and *Democracies Redux*, is Friday, October 16, 2020. Applicants will be notified about the status of their fellowships by October 26, 2020. The first planning meeting for each of these projects will be scheduled in November or December 2020.
Benefits of Participating in Long-Term Projects

In addition to opportunities to expand and enhance their scholarship, Faculty Fellows are supported in many ways throughout their participation in Kahn Institute long-term projects. The Institute provides a space for the weekly colloquia and meals, and it coordinates logistical arrangements associated with each project. In addition, Institute's staff provide Organizing Fellows with administrative support.

The Institute’s Director and the Advisory Board allocate money to each project according to its needs and the availability of funds. Project budgets are administered by the Kahn Institute office. Budget details are worked out by Organizing Fellows in consultation with the Director.

In addition, the Institute provides Faculty Fellows in long-term projects with the following benefits and support:

- A research grant that may be used during the project year or for up to three years after the project concludes. Grants for full-year projects are $3,000.
- A budget to pay honoraria, housing, travel, and other expenses associated with bringing visiting scholars to campus.
- Funds, organizational support, and publicity for public events.
- Potential publishing opportunities.
- Organizing Fellows receive a course release. Junior Faculty Fellows in yearlong projects may choose to receive either a grant or a course release.

Visitors and Public Events

Public events are a key component of every Kahn Institute project. Public events may include lectures, workshops, conferences, performances, exhibitions, films, or any other activity designed to engage the wider academic community in the issues being examined by the Fellows. These events are planned collaboratively by the Fellows in each project with assistance from Kahn Institute staff.
During the planning year and early in the project year, Faculty and Student Fellows are invited to recommend prospective visitors whose work they feel will augment and benefit to the work of the colloquium. Visitors to each project are selected based on group discussions of these recommendations, balanced with careful consideration of issues such as project and academic schedules and budgets.

Visitors may come from other institutions or they may be part of the Smith or Five College community. First and foremost, they come to meet with Project Fellows for an in-depth discussion of a subject that Fellows have identified as important to their work. If a scholar is a particularly good public speaker, or if they have other talents that would benefit a wider range of people, they may also be asked to participate in public events. In addition, a visitor may also meet privately with individual Fellows, visit with classes or labs, attend departmental lunches, or participate in other activities relevant to their area of expertise.

Faculty Fellows are expected to attend public activities associated with their project’s visitors, and when possible, to participate in related functions, such as dinners with visitors.

The Institute aids Fellows in arranging public events, providing assistance with scheduling, submitting paperwork required to pay honoraria and reimbursements, booking rooms, ordering books or other supporting documents, arranging transportation and accommodations for visitors, designing and distributing publicity materials, arranging meals, and coordinating other logistics throughout the visit.

Visiting scholars who participate in public events pursue the subject of their public presentation in more depth with Faculty and Student Fellows by attending a research colloquium session.
Coping with Democratic Precarity and the Prospects for Democratic Renewal

Full-Year Project

Organizing Fellows:
Steven Heydemann, Middle East Studies
Andy Zimbalist, Economics

Democracy is faltering. At every level of governance and across multiple domains, democratic institutions, norms, and practices are under increasing strain. Anxiety about the fate of democracy is not new. Yet the 21st century confronts it with challenges on a scale rarely seen in modern history, raising significant questions about both the sustainability of democracy and how to nurture projects of democratic renewal. At the level of the international system, the post-WWII liberal international order is widely viewed as no longer capable of responding adequately to the anti-democratic forces arrayed against it. At the level of states, a leading index of freedom around the world warned in its 2019 report that democracy is “in retreat,” citing thirteen consecutive years in which democratic freedoms have eroded. At the local level, within communities, organizations and workplaces, basic democratic rights, including the rights of workers to organize and engage in collective bargaining, have been curtailed by the rising power of conservative political forces. Technologies once celebrated as benign and empowering—enabling new forms of grass-roots democratic activism—now loom large as threats to basic democratic rights.

The apparent exhaustion of democratic governance stands in sharp contrast to the vigor and enthusiasm associated with non-democratic ideas and regimes. In the U.S., the EU, and across the developing world, processes of “autocratization” have accelerated. Illiberal political parties that advocate nativist-populist ideologies are gaining ground, weakening social cohesion in societies that inequality, exclusion, and polarization have rendered vulnerable to anti-democratic appeals. Established autocracies, including Russia and China, have consolidated their standing as global powers. New transnational authoritarian networks and institutions are taking shape that diminish possibilities for democratic transformations in world regions such as the Middle East and Latin America.

What does democratic theory have to teach us about the struggles ahead? What is the relationship between pluralism and democracy? What does
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What does democratic theory have to teach us about the struggles ahead? What is the relationship between pluralism and democracy? What does high quality democracy look like and what conditions would foster its development?

The questions and problems are vexing, wide-ranging, and cross-cutting, and, thus, offer rich possibilities for inter-disciplinary engagement. For social scientists, humanists, and scholars in the natural and physical sciences questions about the future of democracy have generated ambitious, exciting research programs that invite exploration from scholars across academic divisions. These include scholarship focusing on the impact of technologies of surveillance and behavioral monitoring (and modification) on democracy, the implications of big data on electoral practices, the effects of internet ubiquity on information flows and social control, the development of systems responsive to democratic norms that are capable of responding effectively to major crises, like pandemics, as well as the causes and effects of new forms of identity politics, the effects of economic inequality on democratic norms and practices, how the ongoing transformations of media are shaping political, social, and economic contexts relevant to the renewal of democracy, the challenges of immigration expansion, the sources and trajectories of new anti-democratic or illiberal politics, and emergent challenges to solidarity within communities, in workplaces, and in other sites in which local forms of politics unfold. Scholars from across the disciplines are also wrestling with how to renew and revitalize democracy, exploring new modes of popular mobilization, including labor mobilization and efforts to give voice to marginalized and excluded communities, new possibilities for strengthening democratic institutions, opportunities to temper the malign effects of economic globalization, and many others. Mindful of the broad, varied, and rich research opportunities that are linked to the theme of democracy, this project will bring together scholars from across disciplines to explore the causes and effects of democratic precarity. Yet the project will not focus exclusively on diagnosing democratic decline and dysfunction. It will also engage scholars across disciplines at Smith and the Five Colleges who direct their attention to possibilities for pathways toward democratic renewal and the realization of high-quality democracy within communities, countries, and in domains of global governance.
Democracies Redux: Resumptions, Resilience, Reconciliation, and Restoration

Full-Year Project

Organizing Fellows:
Sujane Wu, East Asian Languages and Cultures
Payal Banerjee, Sociology

Democracies Redux is an invitation to open up what democracies might mean, carry, and create, when reconsidered as ways of knowing and being that uphold inter-relationships, inclusivity, and the work of restitution and renewal. Moved out of the ballot box and the usual ambits of statecraft, democracies in this project centers itself in investigative commitments that reimagine democracies’ polyvalent manifestations and vital possibilities in the passageways of life, matter, ideas, and their mutuality. The titular insistence on the plural is not merely an accommodation of the variety of governmental institutions in operation worldwide. Democracies Redux demands a deliberate collective reappraisal of its many articulations or negations, unnamed genealogical confluences, and inclusive applications in the fields we study and inhabit across the local and the global. It concentrates on those conceptions of democracies that prioritize ideas of resumption, resilience, reconciliation, and restoration.

How can questions about democracies and mutuality enrich and sustain research that revolves around people and planets, from plants to polymers, to pixels and poetry, or those that pore over cellular materials or pulverized rocks? How might media, musical, literary, artistic, historical, and computational work interact and evolve alongside plural interpretations and transnational expressions? What are the embodied forms in which democracies’ relationship with the unsustainable hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, (dis)abilities, legal status, and economic inequality are manifested? What sanctuaries—tangible and intellectual—are denied or conditionally disbursed in
systems, enumerations, and spaces that are taken to be democratic? How do we reinstate the kinship democracies have with cooperation, equity, and restorative justice, while living through climate change, socio-economic dispossessions, surveillance, containment technologies, and rapid expansions of biometric borders and digitized displacements, to say nothing of the swift, sweeping, violent change of life in and after the global pandemic?

Relatedly, this project seeks further to reckon with our own conditions, some made, and some heightened, by the global pandemic: unfathomable loss, isolation, and disruptions in our capacity to sustain our scholarship and other vital through-lines as faculty and students, offering fellows a grounded place to pause and reflect upon these ideas in the context of what we have coursed through since December 2019. We envision this project as a place to contemplate how and where the work of repair and recovery of our individual research projects—and ourselves—might be carried out. Democracies Redux is both an intellectual project and a retreat, so that the work of reimagining democracies and our scholarship can be resumed from where we are, not from an irretrievable pre-pandemic past.

To sum up, Democracies Redux is a conspiracy against the cruelties of single stories, monologues, and origin narratives that discount and dismember. It is as much about generativity, as it is productivity. In this vein, the project is also a physical address from which the work of resumptions and restoration can be carried out.
# Planning Year Milestones
for 2021-2022 Long-Term Projects

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month(s)</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
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| October 2020           | • Deadline for Faculty Fellowship applications *(October 16, 2020)*  
                          | • Selection of Faculty Fellows                                                                                                      |
| November 2020          | • Faculty Fellowships for long-term projects are announced                                                                            |
| November or December 2020 | • Initial meeting of Faculty Fellows to discuss project planning, scheduling and the selection of Student Fellows                        |
| December 2020          | • Kahn Student Open House                                                                                                               |
| January 2021           | • Students in the Classes of 2022 and 2023 are invited to apply for fellowships                                                         |
| February 2021          | • Information meeting for students interested in applying for fellowship *(early February 2021)*                                    |
|                        | • Deadline for Student Fellowship applications *(February 2021—Date to be determined)*                                               |
| March 2021             | • Faculty Fellows review student applications *(early March 2021)*                                                                     |
|                        | • Faculty Fellows meet to discuss student applications *(March 7-8, 2013)*                                                           |
|                        | *NOTE: This is typically a lunch meeting.*                                                                                              |
| April 2021             | • Welcome Dinner for all Project Fellows                                                                                               |
| May 2021               | • Summer readings or review materials are shared with Fellows                                                                           |
|                        | • Student Fellows attend training meetings with the Institute Director and Reference Librarians                                        |
|                        | • Invitations are sent to prospective visiting scholars for the fall semester                                                         |
| June-September 2021    | • Fellows conduct summer reading and research                                                                                          |
|                        | • Schedule of fall visitors is finalized                                                                                               |
|                        | • Student Fellows attend Research Workshop                                                                                            |
## Project Year Milestones
for 2021-2022 Long-Term Projects

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<th>Month(s)</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 2021</td>
<td>• Full-Year project: Colloquium meetings, meals, visits and public events begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2021</td>
<td>• Selection spring visitors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Weekly colloquium meetings, meals, visits and public events continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2021</td>
<td>• Weekly colloquium meetings and meals, visits and public events continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2021</td>
<td>• Full-year projects: Mid-Year Project Report from Organizing Fellows is due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Schedule of spring visitors is finalized</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Project activities recess for Winter Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>January-February 2022</td>
<td>• Full-Year project: Colloquium meetings, meals, visits and public events resume</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2022</td>
<td>• Weekly colloquium meetings and meals, visits and public events continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2022</td>
<td>• <em>Celebrating Collaborations</em> Day (Student Fellows present)</td>
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<td>• Final colloquium meeting and meal during the last week of classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>May-July 2022</td>
<td>• Project Final Report by Organizing Fellows is due</td>
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2020-2021

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