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Global Humanities Fellowship Search Committee
Tulane Global Humanities Center | Tulane University
6823 St. Charles Avenue | New Orleans, LA 70118

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for the postdoctoral fellowship in the Tulane Global Humanities Center. I earned my Ph.D. in History from the University of Missouri in 2024, where I currently serve as a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow. My dissertation was recently recognized with the university's *Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Humanities*. My research explores how scientific and commercial knowledge circulated in the early modern Atlantic world, particularly through networks shaped by empire, ecology, and maritime infrastructures.

As a historian of science, environment, and political economy in the early modern to modern Atlantic world, my work brings together archival research, material culture, and spatial analysis to study how natural knowledge moved through networks of commerce, empire, and environmental transformation. I am especially excited about your 2025–2027 biennial theme, Global Port Cities, which resonates deeply with my research on logistical labor, specimen economies, and the politics of ecological exchange across colonial infrastructures. With a robust public and digital humanities background, interdisciplinary training, and a commitment to institution-building, I would be thrilled to contribute to the launch and vision of the Tulane Global Humanities Center.

My current book project, *Natures of Exchange: Communicating Natural Knowledge, Commerce, and Empire in John and William Bartram's Early America*, examines how early American naturalists developed logistical models for circulating knowledge through Atlantic port systems. Through fixed-price specimen subscription networks operating across Philadelphia, Charleston, London, and Caribbean ports, the Bartram family commercialized scientific knowledge by leveraging shipping routes, imperial freight systems, and coastal ecologies.

Drawing on archives from the U.S., U.K., and Caribbean, the project uses GIS mapping, thematic coding, and material culture analysis to trace how natural knowledge accrued epistemic and commercial value as it moved between collectors, intermediaries, and imperial centers. While rooted in early American contexts, this project offers comparative frameworks for understanding knowledge economies and extractive labor across the global South, including the Gulf Coast.

Although grounded in early America, my research traces knowledge and specimen flow through colonial networks that intersect with transnational systems of trade and exchange, natural resource extraction

zones, and imperial science systems, offering methodological resonance for broader transoceanic and hemispheric studies. I am especially excited by the potential to engage with regional archives and collaborate with Gulf South scholars, public institutions, and collections at Tulane.

This research forms the foundation of a broader agenda examining how ecological knowledge production functioned within imperial and extractive systems. My approach is shaped by interdisciplinary training and a commitment to understanding how systems of knowledge were built through environmental labor, material culture, and uneven imperial exchange. My work has been supported by the American Philosophical Society, the Huntington Library, Winterthur Museum, and Florida Atlantic University. An article based on this project is currently in preparation, and my full book proposal will be submitted in 2025. During the fellowship year, I plan to complete and submit a chapter-based article tracing how market timing, material constraints, and ecological availability shaped the circulation of botanical specimen and information across trans-Atlantic commercial networks.

My experience organizing public-facing and interdisciplinary humanities programming similarly complements the Center's collaborative mission. At the University of Missouri, I served on the Lecture Series Committee, helped coordinate events, and supported digital humanities workshops and on the Undergraduate Student Committee during five-year review. As project lead for *Madison Historical* a digital archive and encyclopedia, I supervised undergraduate researchers contributing to over 70 oral histories and digital collections, focusing on metadata creation, preservation, and regional engagement through skill based undergraduate learning. I also serve as Social Media Editor for *The Journal of the Early Republic* and its digital companion *The Panorama*, where I lead strategic communications and support editorial initiatives that amplify public scholarship across platforms and communities. These roles have given me practical experience with event planning, public engagement, and interdisciplinary coordination that I would bring enthusiastically to the Center's programming and daily work.

My teaching bridges historical inquiry with public engagement and interdisciplinary skill-building. At Missouri and McKendree University, I have designed and taught over fifteen undergraduate courses, including U.S. environmental history, Atlantic world studies, historical methods, and digital storytelling. My pedagogy emphasizes experiential learning and primary source analysis through public-facing, multimodal assignments. In courses like "Nature's Nation" an environmental history of the United States and in my Borderland history course, students have curated digital exhibits, designed historical atlases, and developed collaborative research projects that foreground Indigenous, environmental, and labor histories.

One of my comprehensive exam fields was in world history, with a focus on consumption, capitalism, and the circulation of goods and information, training that informs my transnational approach to teaching and exchange. I encourage students to examine how global systems of knowledge, trade, and power have shaped local environments, institutions, and inequalities. Whether mapping eighteenth-century botanical trade routes or analyzing the ecological consequences of port development, I encourage students to approach port cities not just as sites of exchange but as spaces shaped by environmental risk, labor, and constraint.

The Tulane fellowship also aligns with a new phase of my research on William Bartram's travels through the Gulf South. Being in residence at Tulane will provide direct access to regional archives, landscapes, and scholarly communities central to this next phase. I plan to finalize my book proposal, advance several chapters, and complete an article titled "Making the Market of Natural Knowledge," which explores how market timing, material constraints, and ecological availability shaped the circulation of botanical specimens.

I am equally eager to contribute to the Center's inaugural programming by helping design interdisciplinary events, curate research presentations, and support digital initiatives that highlight port environments as intersections of ecological change, cultural production, and imperial power.

The opportunity to join the Tulane Global Humanities Center at its founding moment is both exciting and meaningful. I welcome the opportunity and chance to help shape a transnational, collaborative, and publicly engaged research community that reflects the Gulf South's entangled imperial, ecological, and port city histories and speaks to the broader stakes of your Global Port Cities initiative.

Thank you for considering my application and happy to provide additional information at your request.

Sincerely,

Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.