SHARPUREDGE

Fall 2026 *Volume 3*

Humanities

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to this year's issue of Sharpur Edge! This edition celebrates the humanities at Binghamton University – the fields that invite us to think critically, ask big questions, and reflect on the human experience. From literature and philosophy to medieval and Asian American studies, the stories here show how students engage deeply with ideas, culture, and society.

In these pages, you'll find work that inspires and sparks conversation. Each piece reflects the curiosity and creativity of our community, offering perspectives that extend beyond the classroom and into the ways we understand the world and ourselves.

A special thanks to our advisors, Erin Cody and Megan Konstantakos, for their guidance, and to all of the writers and contributors whose voices make this issue possible. Their dedication brings the humanities to life and highlights the power of expression.

We hope this issue encourages you to explore, question, and connect with the ideas and stories presented here, and to appreciate all the ways the humanities shape our lives!

All the best,
Grace

The Value of The Humanities

By Esti Klein

At college, there's a huge range of learning happening that produces very concrete results: with computer science, you can play the program you've coded, with chemistry, you can watch a chemical reaction, and so on. The humanities are disciplines that focus on history, human culture, and experience. Its impacts can be harder to see, as they focus largely on the theoretical, but creating this information is equally important to that of other fields' results. Fields within the humanities allow us to define who we are and record it, strengthen our critical thinking, and diversify our society.

The field provides and enhances critical skills that can be used across disciplines. Binghamton's president, Anne D'Alleva, studied the humanities: she received her Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. in art history with a graduate certificate in feminist theory. She says that today, her background in the humanities has strengthened her awareness of perspectives —"whose voices are centered, whose are missing, and how power and meaning are constructed"—and her attention to the way everyday actions fit into the bigger picture.

"I often hear myself saying in meetings, 'Let's take a step back...' in order to focus on the back story or context of the situation under discussion, and that's a humanities approach to problems," she said. "[E]mpathy, historical awareness, and moral imagination are not abstract ideals, but values that should infuse daily life."

In order to determine what it means to be human, these fields engage with varied perspectives on what produces humanity. Language, history, culture, and literature are all things that we have developed to see a reflection of humankind. A better understanding of our formation not only broadens our thinking but deepens our relationship to others, too: you're able to look around at others with a heightened sense of the things informing their character and actions. Simultaneously a search for universals and specificity, the humanities allows us to see ourselves and others in the context of society and history.

Resourceful Research

By Esti Klein

At most institutions, students interested in the Humanities would be hard-pressed to find opportunities for undergraduate research. Binghamton University, however, offers a multitude of chances for Humanities undergraduates to get involved—the Source Project being one example that has resulted in exceptional student findings and development.

Binghamton is classified as an R1 research institute, the highest designation given to research universities, meaning its output is frequent, and its funding for research is substantial. The Source Project was spearheaded in 2017 as an effort to diversify the research being conducted in Binghamton, conceptualized as a sister program to the STEM-oriented First-year Research Immersion program. Today, it offers incoming students ten streams of research from which to choose, with topics ranging from "Stereotypes and Stuttering" to "Arts and Innovation: Do It Wrong on Purpose."

Trevor Fornara
Photo by Jonathan Cohen

Trevor's Source Project looked into the impact of Binghamton University's growth on the local housing crisis in the surrounding local areas. After, he went on to graduate with a Bachelor's in Philosophy, Politics, and Law.

He started the nonpartisan student-run magazine Happy Medium, was a co-creator of the university's Civil Dialogue Project and the nonprofit Positive Connection Initiative, and is currently coordinator for the dialogue program at Dartmouth College.

Lia's research began in the Source Project and was finished in the Summer Scholars and Artists Program. It focused on a 1930s trial in which a woman sued her mother for unjustly sterilizing her and its connection to eugenics' cementation in the justice system and subsequent disinformation practices. Today, she is a first-year PhD student at Stony Brook University, continuing her research in eugenics, sterilization,

Lia Richter

These streams change every year, but they are always curated in such a way that the class connects first-year students with each other and the professor. Professors are given more creative freedom to teach within their field, and students are given the chance in the second semester to explore something of their own interest. This mutual passion fosters close relationships and small academic communities within each stream, contrasting with the lecture halls most first-year students primarily take.

Many students find research to be transformative: it is an experience that is entirely self-motivated, and so students pursuing research must develop skills that enhance themselves. Source Project participants learn how to do a literature review for research, public speaking for poster sessions, network with professionals in a field, and, most importantly, believe in the value of their own work.

The Source Project isn't the only chance for Harpur students to experience Humanities research. For those with no research experience, Campus Research Opportunity Postings (CROP) lists faculty projects looking for students to do research. The External Scholarship and Undergraduate Research Center connects students with opportunities offered both on- and off-campus—their office is in the union, just above Fleishman! Beyond that, the value of making connections with peers and professors cannot be overemphasized. Go to your professor's office hours, meet with your Teaching Assistants, and talk with your friends about your ideas. There are so many people and institutions on campus that care about the fact that you care about something and want to make it a reality.

Currently a senior Chemistry and Environmental Sciences double major at Binghamton, Jubilation's research on chemical water contamination on public health led her to find her passion in water equity and protection advocacy.

She additionally works multiple jobs on campus, founded the Neurodiversity and Marine Science clubs, and is working towards fulfilling the Broome County Dozen Hiking Challenge.

Jubilation Yeh

Kristen Li

Kristen Li's research explored how racial segregation was enacted through housing bias with such tactics as redlining, zoning, racial covenants, and urban redevelopment in Broome County; research she is continuing on campus with a team of researchers. A junior majoring in Philosophy, Politics, and Law and minoring in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Kristen is also an Undergraduate Research Ambassador for the External Scholarship and Undergraduate Research Center on campus.

The humanities can take you ANYWHERE

Humanities majors become experts in the skills employers value MOST:

- analyzing information and synthesizing ideas
- thinking flexibly and understanding nuance
- considering social and ethical consequences
- researching deeply and efficiently
- writing and communicating clearly
- arguing persuasively
- telling stories
- understanding different cultural perspectives

They can thrive in any field:

Humanities majors succeed in entertainment, law, education, media, non-profit, marketing, and more.

They are highly successful applying to graduate school, including law school and medical school.

And while STEM majors have higher salaries in their first jobs after college, humanities majors catch up over the next decade, and even come out on top.

Binghamton's humanities departments are training the next generation of leaders!

Experts agree:

"We're entering a world where the skills acquired in the pursuit of the humanities are not only going to be the most indispensable, but some of the most highly sought-after soon."

–Lindsey McInerney, CEO and futurist

"What matters now is not the skills you have but how you think. Can you ask the right questions? Do you know what problem you're trying to solve in the first place?"

–Harvard Business Review

"In [the AI age], a company's competitive edge won't be based on access to information but the ability to analyze it—precisely the skills sharpened through the study of literature, history, philosophy and the arts."

--Guy Diedrich, Senior Vice President at Cisco

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EL SALVADOR
Isabel Bonhomme
MOROCCO
Sara Stowell
CANADA
James Hamilton
KOSOVO
Do you want to learn more about Fulbright?
Friday, April 10, 2026, 1:30-2:30 at LN 2200 (Alpern Room)
BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY | EXTERNAL SCHOLARSHIPS AND UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CENTER
Dr. Elise Cutsinelli, Senior Fulbright Advisor

2026 SEMI-FINALISTS
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Congratulations
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PERSIAN BEGINNING
James Hamilton
PERSIAN BEGINNING
Daniel Monzingo
PORTUGUESE INTERMEDIATE
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The Power of Words: Liberating Yet Confining

The summer before junior year, I experienced one of those days you don't come back the same from. When one ventures out into the anony- mity of the woods, they hope to come back changed by actions and observ- ations they alone are privy to. I was lost, only slightly, but pleasantly enough to lose track of how many turns I'd taken on each trail to get to where I stood now. I decided to sit, finding shade and refuge on a log. I looked at the ants crawling in straight lines across the dirt. I thought about the way they seemed to leave the decision-making for the way they interacted with each other, up to these patterns, conserving the little energy they had for their more basic needs. Were we as humans really that different? We rely heavily on placing people in boxes to make our everyday lives a bit easier and lean on predict- ability. Perhaps this is some leftover instinct from when we had mental capa- cities comparable to birds or, going back far enough, even ants. As much as we like to think that wearing clothing makes us into complex creatures in- capable of making primal judgments, we conserve energy in our habit of judging books by their covers. We often assume guilt or innocence based on someone's choice in clothing, physical appearance, and even manner of speech. As much as law is supposed to be the corrective lens of society that sustains humanity, we, as humans, still rely heavily on instinctual heuristics.

In fact, through my readings, internships, and volunteering at the offices of political stakeholders, I saw firsthand how systems and language fail individuals immensely, how neutrality masks injustice, and how people are subjected to judgment before they're heard. Not long before starting my internship at the Councilman's office, I had read Vladimir Nabokov's Invitation To A Beheading, and that was the first time that I truly confronted how systems, both political and social, disguise suppression in order. It opened my eyes to how language is intentionally weaponized in an effort to divide and exclude rather than bridge. But until I observed and studied it firsthand, I never knew that the way language is manipulated to control people is far from extinct. In Nabokov's novel, Cincinnatus is sentenced to death by beheading for a crime referred to as "gnostical turpitude" (Nabokov, 64), which, if you just paused and thought, "what even is that?", fear not, dear reader; it does not make any sense. In fact, it should not make any sense. It's a term that sounds serious enough to belong in a dusty law book, but when you take a moment to unpack it, it's really nothing more than a hollow label. Nabokov's story showed me how language and labels can be used to control and exclude.

Scribbled between doodles of friends, a lightbulb moment with extra voltage found its way into my journal. I realized that if I truly wanted to be a real part of the legal system and be representative of those who feel cast aside by our society and government, I'd have to learn to see humans as they were, and not simply my own jaded projections of the kinds of people I believed them to be. Most importantly, I would also have to learn how language can be used to include, rather than exclude.

By Michelle Belakh

Wanderer

by Selinda Lauren

Wander through backyards.
Skip on crosswalks,
Made from window lights.

Wander through memories that aren't yours.
Walk the lines of hands,
And trace them back to softness.

Wander through histories,
Filtering lives through faces of conquest.
See how they measure empathy in degrees.

Wander through crimes older than you.
Do the time, then do it again,
Paced on a heartbeat.

Wander through tongues,
Until they're familiar in the shape of their roots,
In the taste of their blood.

Wander through sunrises.
Find what's on the other side.

Wander through fear.
Wander through anger.
Wander through grief.

Wander through as someone new.

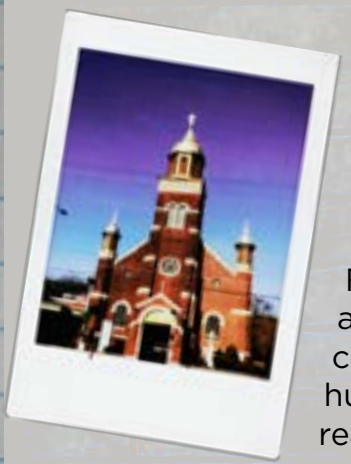
Student Spotlight: Deniz Gulay

By: Esti Klein

Deniz Gulay's pursuit of a career in the humanities began before he arrived at college. He was emailing professors as soon as he found out he was accepted to Binghamton; his plan was to make contacts with people and gain experience through new connections. Once he arrived on campus, he sought opportunities that aligned with his existing interests in history and society. While traveling around Binghamton, he noticed multiple Russian Orthodox churches in the city and kept wondering where they came from. This curiosity stuck with him as he joined the Source Project, where he researched where these churches came from by conducting field work and perusing archives.

Currently, he's a junior double-majoring in Histry and Russian, who in his free time writes weekly Opinion articles for Pipe Dream and hosts a radio talk show on WHRW. Through his professors, he was connected with opportunities to speak at conferences and continue his research over the summer abroad.

When asked what qualities have been most important in guiding him to the current moment, Gulay highlights curiosity, discipline, and persistence. It is because he kept his eyes open to the world around him, constantly asking questions, that he was ever able to build out his research. The ability to remain focused and dedicated to achieving his goals is discipline—a willingness to put consistent effort into something that he cares about, because he understands that it is valuable. Lastly, persistence—in all aspects of his life—has been pivotal in shaping his path. He notes that "The more you give something, the more it returns back to you, whether that be a project or a professor."



His study of history has allowed him to further develop those skills, as well as others. Field work has allowed him to connect with other human beings in a really meaningful and grounded way throughout history. “People look down on the humanities for being too elitist,” he said. “They see academia as isolated communities of professors spending time being abstract. But the humanities fundamentally have to do with humans themselves, and you can’t comprehend humans without conversing and engaging with them.”

Working with people face-to-face has enabled Gulay to develop his interpersonal skills. He found that from interviews with others, he has become a better listener, converser, and more emotionally engaged with those in his own personal life. Looking into the faces of those whom he is directly researching has also given him a sense of the range of his work. The job of historians is to archive not abstractions or artifacts but to create a living record of human beings.

Many of his skills were acquired through trial and error, not just naturally occurring within him. The difficulties he encountered during his professional work gave him perspective, rather than shut him down.“

The kind of man I want to be in life is [the] person in the humanities who forms connections, compassion, and mutual understanding,” he said. “I want to be the person who encourages others to engage with the humanities.”

The only way to do this, then, is to be the first to engage and then reach out to others. To be a part of one’s own ideal community, perhaps you must be the person to build it.

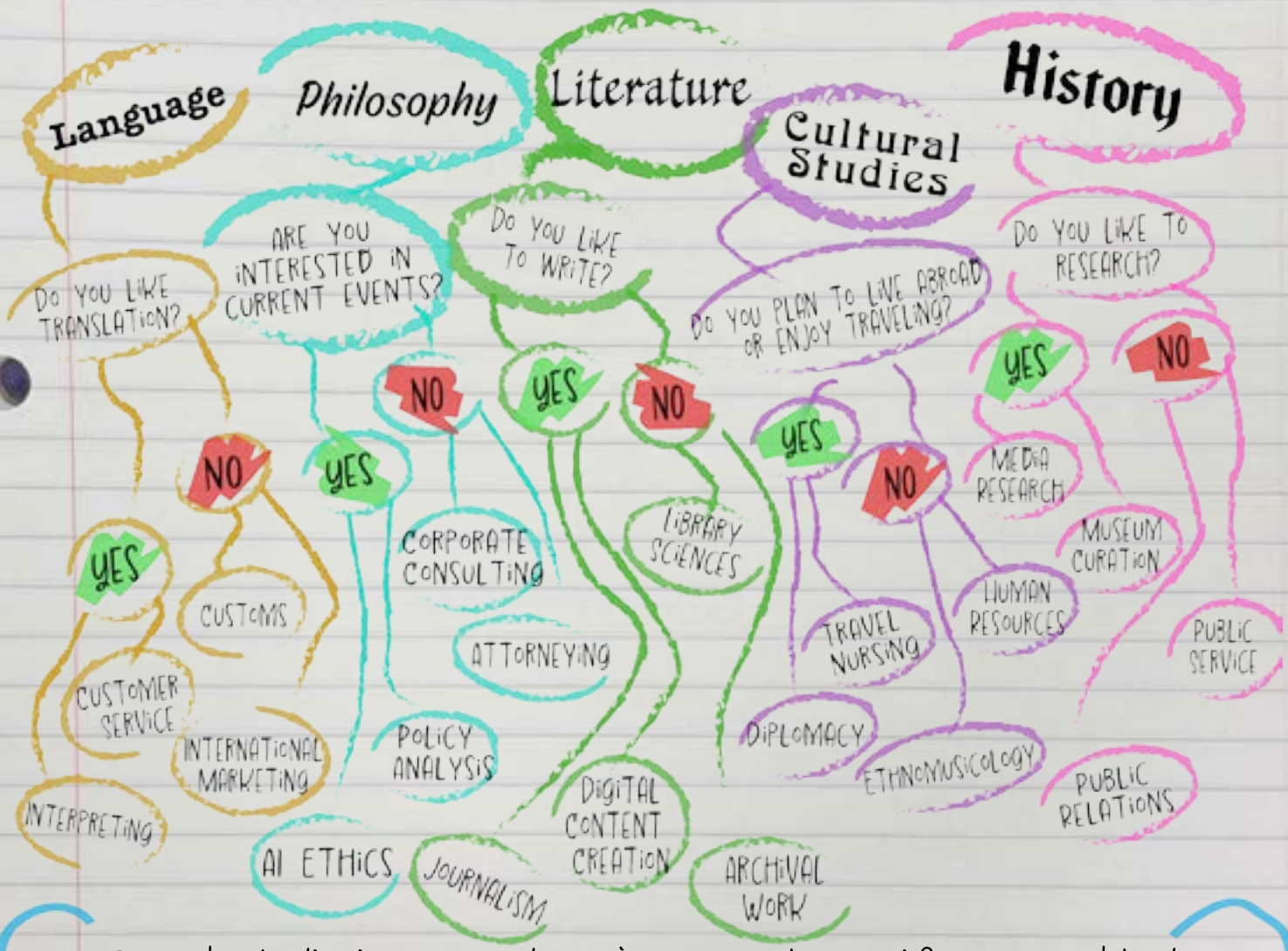
Ultimately, Gulay reinforces the cruciality of proactivity in one’s own path.

“Opportunities don’t just come your way.” “They are out there among the people. Experience and willingness to be active are what make things count.”

If the humanities allow us to put the human experience under a microscope, Humanities students at Binghamton are both creating and reflecting upon that experience at once. Your path is not just shaped; you shape it, and get to determine its meaning.

MAJOR MIND MAP

If you're majoring in the humanities—or thinking of majoring in the humanities—you might be wondering what kinds of jobs there are to do after graduation beyond academia. Luckily, there are so many fields to choose from! Below are a few possible career paths.



But don't limit yourselves just to these; if you need help finding out where you're headed in life, stop by Harpur Edge or set up a career-consulting appointment.

Ten Words that Define Binghamton's Humanities

Grace Scollo

If the humanities are built on anything, they are built on words. Before there are theories, debates, or syllabi, there is language. The humanities begin with close reading, and they depend on our ability to critically engage with the words we use to describe the world.Binghamton's humanities course descriptions reveal that certain words appear again and again. Across programs, time periods, and regions, the same vocabulary shows up, suggesting shared priorities and commitments. Here are some of the words that define the humanities at Binghamton.

Identity

Courses explore how identities are represented and performed. Identity is not fixed, but it is shaped by history and social forces. Its recurrence in our course descriptions signals the humanities' focus on understanding the self in context.

Power

Power appears as a central theme in examining authority, hierarchy, and influence. Courses encourage students to notice structures beneath the surface and to question who benefits and who is silenced.

Memory

Memory appears as something personal, cultural, and collective, and links the past to the present. Courses examine how remembering and forgetting shape identity and society.

Justice

Ethics and responsibility recur throughout course descriptions. Justice is framed as a lived concern and connects historical context with contemporary moral questions.

Narrative

Narrative explores how stories are constructed and how they shape perception. Storytelling extends beyond fiction into our studies of history, politics, and culture, revealing the humanities' focus on theme and lesson.

Migration

Migration highlights the movement of people, ideas, and texts. It emphasizes exchange and transformation across cultures, showing the humanities' attention to global interconnectedness.

Resistance

Resistance appears as both a subject and a method. It emphasizes the critique and questioning of structures and allows students to engage with activism and challenging frameworks.

Language

Language is treated as a force that structures thought and culture. Rhetoric and translation show that words do not just describe the world, but that they actively shape it.

Representation

Representation examines who is visible, how identities are portrayed, and who is omitted. Courses dive into imagery and symbolism to reveal social power dynamics.

Interpretations

Interpretation underlies all other words. Students learn not just content but methods for analyzing, contextualizing, and rethinking texts and ideas.

Quest Check

Together, these recurring words show that Binghamton's humanities are globally aware and grounded. They reveal a curriculum focused on understanding how culture, power, and language shape human experience.

Where Our Stories Touch

By Diethinia Rollins

I've been thinking about what it means To be human,
Not the textbook answer,
Not the neat little definition
We memorize for a midterm,
But the real thing.
The messy thing.
The breathing thing.

I've been thinking about how
Every single one of us walks around With a library behind our ribs.
Stories we've lived,
Stories we've survived,
Stories we're still afraid to say out loud
Because we're scared someone
Might not understand.

But the humanities,
They teach us that understanding Is the whole point.
That we read,
And write,
And question,
And argue,
And create
Because somewhere in those actions,
We found each other again.

In poetry class,
I watch strangers
Turn into mirrors.
Someone shares a piece about heartbreak, And suddenly
Every person in the room
Remembers the first time
Their voices cracked around someone's name. Someone else writes about home,
And we all see a place
That doesn't even look the same as ours, Yet somehow feels familiar.

That's the thing.
The things that unite us
Don't yell
They whisper.
They sit softly
In the way we reach for connection
Even when we were scared of it.
They live in language,
In every word we fumble for
When feelings get too heavy
And we need something
Strong enough to hold them.

Culture is not just tradition;
It's the rhythm of who we are.
It's the music in our bones,
The recipes passed down without measuring cups, The stories our parents told us
Even when they didn't realize
They were teaching us.
And creativity,
It's the light we strike
When we can't see our way through.
It's how we survive.
How we resist.
How we say,
"I'm here,
I'm hurting,
I'm hopeful,
I'm human,"
All in the same breath.

The humanities matter
Because they remind us
That progress is pointless
If we forget the people in it.
That we can build bigger machines,
Faster networks,
Louder futures
But none of that means anything
If we lose the ability
To understand each other.

In a world full of noise,
The humanities teach us to listen.

In a world full of division,
They give us a language
To stitch ourselves back together.

In a world full of rushing,
They tell us to sit still
And read someone else's story,
Not because it's ours,
But because it's not,
And we need to know what life feels like beyond the borders of our own experience.

This is why I write this,
Hands open,
Heart loud,
Writing poems
That might not change the world
But could change the way someone feels for a moment.
Because that's where connection begins, In the moment our stories touch.

And if the humanities have taught me anything, It's that there is
not greater work,
No deeper calling,
Than learning each other
Again and again
Until being human
Feels a little less lonely.

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Relationship-building with Mentor Programs
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FIND YOUR EDGE.