

# ASU Humanities initiative launches as one-stop shop for all things humanities

## Initiative's website focuses on career outcomes, real-world applications

By Lauren Whitby, ASU News  
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This August, Arizona State University launched [ASU Humanities](#), which gives students and community members a one-stop shop for all things humanities at ASU.

The initiative's new website highlights career-focused academics and measurable community impact of ASU Humanities programs and research.

"The humanities are strong across ASU's campuses," said [Jeffrey Cohen](#), dean of humanities at The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. "We work together to ensure that no matter at what college a faculty member teaches or where a student takes a course, they know that they are part of a vibrant community internationally known for its excellence as well as its commitment to building more humane futures."

The site's new [areas of study page](#) allows students to browse over 75 degree options and consider which programs meet their needs. Humanities degrees are offered at three colleges at ASU: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, and New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences.

## Degrees for a continually evolving job market

The ASU Humanities [careers page](#) gives examples of how programs at ASU prepare students for a fulfilling life and successful career in today's competitive job market. For example, internship experiences with local organizations, such as the Arizona History Museum and Arizona Jewish Historical Society, as well as access to hands-on research help students gain critical career-readiness skills to solve the challenges of today and the future.

Several new initiatives are designed to help students make career connections and solve present-day challenges as they pursue their passions in the humanities.

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ASU's annual [Humanities Week](#), which celebrated its fourth year in fall 2024, includes a panel of alumni discussing how the skills they gained through a humanities education — such as critical thinking, ethical judgment, effective writing and creativity — have positively influenced their jobs.

The Futures Initiative at The College has begun an ongoing project to incorporate career-focused courses into all majors. ENG 300: Your Degree in the World, taught by Cohen, invites English students to explore the kinds of work they can do with their educational background.

The humanities, Cohen said, are ideal for empowering students with the skills they need for a shifting career landscape.

[A 2023 study](#) by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences backs that up. It found that humanities majors' unemployment rates were comparable to other college graduates, and that their salaries were “comparable to or better than the salaries of workers who majored in most non-humanities fields.” Humanities majors have lucrative careers despite the false narrative that these degrees don't lead to “real jobs.”

Since Cohen started as dean in 2018, the humanities division at The College has seen a growth in undergraduate humanities majors from 3,800 to 4,300, during a time period when many universities have witnessed a [significant decline in undergraduate humanities enrollment](#).

“The liberal arts (or liberalis artes — literally, the knowledge worthy of a free person) are critical areas of study and research because they engage processes of learning that citizens in a well-functioning democracy require, and the humanities have always sat in the bedrock of the liberal arts,” said [Ayanna Thompson](#), executive director of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and Regents Professor in the Department of English.

“Studying Shakespeare may not be the most important thing you can do in the 21st century, but studying Shakespeare to learn how to learn, to learn how to read the society you live in, and to learn how to be a critical and creative thinker amidst complexity — that might be the most important thing you can do in today's world.”

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## What are the humanities?

According to the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) (NEH), “the humanities explore, interpret, and preserve the diversity of human cultures, ideas, practices and experiences, past and present. They are the languages, religions, laws, philosophies, and customs that make us distinct. They are our history and our cultures, the ideas and movements that have shaped societies throughout time.”

ASU Humanities explores the human experience across time, culture and place. Various disciplines include writing, language study, history, philosophy, religious studies, film and media, literature, narrative studies, creative writing, English education and linguistics. Humanities majors like ASU's [culture, technology and environment degree](#) inform and intersect with other disciplines to solve present challenges and build a more humane world.

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**Read more:** [How the humanities can prepare students for jobs in any field](#)

## Humanities research with community impact

The new ASU Humanities site also features (on its [impact page](#)) humanities-based research with real-world applications for Arizona communities and the nation.

For example, the RaceB4Race scholarly network and symposium series, hosted by the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, brings together scholars to engage on issues of race in premodern literature, history and culture, such as the earliest formations of systemic racism. Its impact is recognized with [\\$6 million of collaborative, cross-institutional awards](#) from the Mellon Foundation.

The [Desert Humanities](#), housed in the Humanities Institute, invites interdisciplinary reflection and research on the desert Southwest. The initiative provides opportunities to experience urban and rural desert sites and engage with their complex histories, diverse ecologies and possible futures.

A community-based project in the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts' [Latinx Oral History Lab](#) aims to recover and preserve the [historical contributions of the Latino community](#) in the East Valley and the city of Chandler.

"ASU is built on interdisciplinary study, innovation, inclusion and knowledge for the public good. All of these values are central to the humanities, and not coincidentally, ASU has a long history of these disciplines flourishing here. Our English department is about to [celebrate 125 years](#)," Cohen said.

"We are a community with an international reputation because ASU has invested in our future. Students continue to choose to study with us because they know they will live better lives for the good work that they undertake."

*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

## Main image



Over 75 humanities degrees are offered across three colleges at ASU: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, and New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. Photo courtesy of ASU Humanities