October 25, 2010

Dear Colleague,

We are delighted about your interest in "20th Century American Philosophy: Quine and Davidson," an NEH Summer Seminar to be held at Princeton University, June 20–July 29, 2011.

This six week summer seminar will bring together sixteen participants with strong backgrounds in philosophy or linguistics, including college and university teachers and two outstanding graduate students. The aim of the seminar is to deepen an understanding of American philosophy in the previous century through an examination of themes in W.V.O. Quine (1908-2000) and Donald Davidson (1917-2003). Although Quine and Davidson have been, and continue to be, highly influential, their work is often misunderstood through oversimplification and failure to take into account ways in which their ideas developed and matured over time in response to other philosophers and especially to each other. The second decade of the 21st Century is a good time to take stock of their continuing relevance to contemporary discussion. It is also a good time to ensure that the next generation of students has teachers who understand and appreciate these ideas and theories in their total contexts rather than as isolated doctrines.

This letter offers a summary of our objectives and the intellectual content of the program. You will also find all the practical information you need, such as how to apply, qualifications, housing and facilities, and the major research resources.

FACULTY

The seminar will be led by Gilbert Harman and Ernest Lepore. Gilbert Harman is James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. He was a student of Quine’s and colleague of Davidson’s and has written extensively about both philosophers. He and Davidson co-edited two collections of papers in philosophy and linguistics and co-directed a six week 1971 Summer Institute in Philosophy and Linguistics on the same subject. In addition Harman directed an NEH Seminar in 1982 on Reasoning. Ernest Lepore is Director of the Center for Cognitive Science and Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers University. Among his many books are Donald Davidson: Truth, Meaning, Rationality in Mind, (Oxford University Press, 2005) and Donald Davidson’s Truth-theoretic Semantics, (Oxford University Press, 2007) both with Kirk Ludwig. He organized a four day conference on Davidson’s work in 1985. He has previous directed an NEH Seminar on Holism in 1993 and an NEH Institute on the Metaphysics of Meaning in 1994.

Four influential philosophers will visit the seminar: Barry Loewer, Gideon Rosen, Kirk Ludwig, and Thomas Kelly. Loewer is Professor and Chair of Philosophy at Rutgers University
(12 miles from Princeton); he has published numerous articles in philosophy of mind, language and logic. He is one of the most respected philosophers working on topics central to the seminar. Gideon Rosen is Stuart Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Council of Humanities at Princeton University. His areas of research include metaphysics, epistemology and moral philosophy. He is the author (with John Burgess) of A Subject with No Object (Oxford, 1997). Kirk Ludwig is Professor of Philosophy at Indiana University. He has worked on foundational issues in the philosophy of language (especially logical form and semantics), epistemology, the philosophy of mind and action, and metaphysics, though his interests extend to every area of philosophical inquiry. He is the editor of the volume on Donald Davidson (2003) in the Cambridge Contemporary Philosophy in Focus series, and he is coauthor with Ernie Lepore (Rutgers) of Donald Davidson: Meaning, Truth, Language and Reality (OUP 2005) and Donald Davidson's Truth-theoretic Semantics (OUP 2007). Thomas Kelly is Associate Professor of Philosophy and George H. and Mildred F. Whitfield University Preceptor in the Humanities at Princeton University. His research interests lie primarily within epistemology (broadly construed) and the theory of rationality, especially the relationship between theoretical and practical rationality, the epistemological significance of persistent disagreement, and the extent to which one's starting point constrains the kinds of revisions in one's beliefs that philosophical argument might legitimately inspire.

THE SCHEDULE

The seminar will meet three times a week for six weeks. Each meeting will last roughly three hours and will consist in relatively short presentations followed by intensive discussion. We will also help to arrange reading and discussion groups among the participants by themselves. The seminar sessions will usually begin with an introduction to the assigned topic/readings by one of the two directors, or by a seminar visitor, or by one of the participants (later in the program) followed by a long organized discussion based on questions distributed ahead of time. Our aim is to create an environment in which we can all engage in fruitful dialogue about a wide range of interesting topics.

Week 1: The Analytic-Synthetic Distinction, the Reconstruction of Meaning on an Empirical Basis, Radical Translation, Indeterminacy, and Ontological Relativity

Rudolph Carnap (1891-1970) was an important philosopher of the 20th century. In these three seminars, we will explain the disagreement between Quine and Carnap---Quine's de facto mentor. Quine began his career as an enthusiastic supporter of Carnap and the so-called Logical Positivist movement, but over the years their paths diverged. Quine became, in fact, Carnap's deepest most persistent yet most sympathetic critic. These three seminars will trace the nature of their disagreements and their significance.

Week 2: Ontology, Ontological Commitment, and Modality

The metaphysical tradition that Quine and American philosophy in general inherited from the logical positivists is that basic ontological and modal commitments are language-dependent, that is, they depend on what definitions are chosen. If you choose differently from me, we do not disagree; we merely speak different languages. Languages are not true or false; they are not that sort of thing. Rather, the choice of a language is a matter of convention---which means we could
have chosen otherwise. When Quine and Carnap diverged, it was not a retreat to the methods that pre-date the positivist---an appeal to intuition---but rather Quine sought to replace both frameworks with a novel metaphysical framework. We will explore the debate and his novel position in these three seminars.

Week 3: Regimentation, and Naturalized Epistemology

Along with Quine's metaphysical innovations came a novel epistemological approach. According to Quine, scientific reasoning begins with a body of beliefs, the beliefs we do in fact have. Quine calls this "the lore of our fathers." Experience does not always conform to these beliefs, so we must revise. Our revisions are guided by two principles: simplicity and conservativism. We want to effect as simple and tidy a system as possible and we want to preserve as much of our previous beliefs as possible. They give rise to a new---a naturalized---epistemology. The topics of these three seminars will be to develop and evaluate his proposals.

Week 4: A Compositional Theory of Meaning

We will in these three lectures examine the development of Davidson's program in the theory of meaning, drawing primarily on his twin papers "Theories of Meaning and Learnable Languages" and "Truth and Meaning." The former introduced the project of constructing a compositional meaning theory for natural languages. The latter introduced the suggestion that a truth theory can fulfill this function. This will lead us to the formulation of an explicit compositional meaning theory, and a discussion of the relation of the theory to a representation of linguistic competence.

Week 5: Logical Form and Agency

Davidson's most famous article, "Actions, Reasons and Causes," championed the view that ordinary action explanation is causal explanation of a special sort, namely, a sort which cites causes which also show minimally what was to be said for the action from the agent's perspective. An action explanation, according to Davidson, is successful when it indicates what he called the primary reasons for the agent's action. A primary reason shows something about what was to be said for the action from the agent's point of view. What these views about the nature of action reveal to us about agency and the more technical issue of the logical form of action (and event) sentences are the topics of these three seminars.

Week 6: Propositional Attitudes and Radical Interpretation

Davidson's project of Radical Interpretation and Quine's project of Radical Translation are similar. In each case, the evidence ultimately available to a theorist consists in the speaker's responses to his environment, which reveal his dispositions to verbal behavior. But whereas for Quine the radical translator aims to produce a translation manual, for Davidson the radical interpreter seeks to produce a theory of interpretation that says not what expressions and sentences are the same in meaning but what expressions and sentences mean. And whereas the radical translator keys his translations to responses to stimulus patterns, the radical interpreter keys his interpretation to speaker responses to distal rather than patterns of stimulation at the sensory surfaces. How all this plays out and why these philosophers disagree are the topics of these three seminars.
RESEARCH

Participants will be expected to produce the equivalent of a significant paper or a curricular proposal related in some way to the topics of the seminar. Judging from our past experiences with NEH seminars, we predict that the participants will be eager for feedback on ongoing projects and work-in-progress. This has certainly been the case in our prior experience as NEH seminar directors. (In Lepore's last NEH Seminar participants produced an invaluable collection of papers on the topic of the seminar (holism) with Lepore (and Fodor, his co-director) replying in print to each.) In short, we intend to spend much of our time working with individual participants, reading and discussing drafts of papers, and facilitating interaction among them as well as with seminar visitors.

The most dramatic on-site benefit of seminars is the opportunity they provide for discussion outside formal seminar meetings. In our prior experiences, seminar participants organized discussion groups on a variety of topics. The departmental common room will be available to participants as a convenient meeting place and will help to facilitate interaction between seminar participants and members of the local philosophical community.

Participants also will be invited to seek out faculty and graduate students in both the Princeton and Rutgers programs. The cities of Princeton and New Brunswick are both sufficiently small with large comfortable departments where graduate students for certain and often faculty as well regularly work and lunch together. Between the two departments there are some 50 faculty in philosophy and another 25 in linguistics and another 25 in cognitive science and over 100 graduate students in these combined programs and disciplines. We hope to organize enough external seminar events for the seminar participants to be able to facilitate causal meetings between participants and some of these individuals.

We intend also to create a seminar website that will become a focal point, providing links to most of the seminar readings, power-point presentations, as well as providing space for discussion among participants, visitors, and the directors. It will also function as a pre-seminar forum for ideas pertaining to readings, and, during the seminar period, could be used for announcements and ongoing philosophical discussions. (We assume that it will function as an invaluable resource after the seminar for planning courses on the materials of the seminar at the participants' home institutions.)

PRINCETON, NJ

Princeton University, one of the oldest and most distinguished universities in the U.S., is located in the charming town of Princeton in Central New Jersey. The area around the University is rural, dotted with small villages and farms, and offers many opportunities for outdoor recreation in the summer. It is also an hour from the New Jersey shore, with further recreational opportunities. New York City is just over an hour away either by car or by New Jersey Transit commuter rail. Philadelphia is even closer.

FACILITIES

The seminar will take place in historic 1879 Hall at Princeton, the home of the
Department of Philosophy, to which Marx Hall was recently added. The building is fully air-conditioned. We will have the use of the Department’s bright and airy main seminar room for our seminar meetings, as well as a smaller seminar room in which to keep reference materials for the use of seminar participants. The University has wireless access to the internet in virtually all University buildings, as well computer clusters that are widely available. Participants will have complete access to the University libraries. The Firestone Library is one of the great research collections in the U.S. The library owns virtually all of the materials that we shall need, and can quickly get anything that it might not have on hand. Participants will also have access to the library of the Princeton Theological Seminary, which has a superb collection in the history of philosophy. The Directors have also been collecting rare books and reprints, microfilms, and microfiches and CDs of rare books and manuscripts in early modern philosophy. Their personal collections will be made available to the participants during the seminar. Copies of all essential books will be placed in the Philosophy library room for the use of participants who do not own them.

Participants will receive a stipend of $4500 for the six week seminar. While participating in the seminar, participants will have full access to the University libraries, the athletic facilities, and all other campus facilities, including parking. Housing will be available at about $1200 for the six weeks on the Princeton University campus in new dormitory rooms that are part of Butler College. The rooms are located near kitchens that can be used to prepare meals. In addition, we will offer help to participants who want to seek housing in the larger Princeton community.

Application information is included with this letter. Perhaps the most important part of the application is the essay. This essay should include your reasons for applying to the specific project; your relevant personal and academic information; your qualifications to do the work of the project and make a contribution to it; what you hope to accomplish; and the relation of the study to your teaching. In addition, we would like you to submit a sample of your recent writing, preferably something related to the topic of this Summer Seminar.

Letters from your recommenders

Your completed application should be postmarked no later than March 1, 2010, and should be addressed as follows:

Prof. Gilbert Harman  
NEH Summer Seminar  
Department of Philosophy  
Princeton University  
1879 Hall  
Princeton, NJ 08544

We very much look forward to reading your application.

Sincerely yours,
Gilbert Harman
Professor of Philosophy
Princeton University

Ernest Lepore
Chair Center for Cognitive Science
Professor of Philosophy
Rutgers University
NEH SUMMER SEMINARS AND INSTITUTES
FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

APPLICATION INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

Summer Seminars and Institutes for College and University Teachers are offered by the National Endowment for the Humanities to provide college and university faculty members and independent scholars with an opportunity to enrich and revitalize their understanding of significant humanities ideas, texts, and topics. These study opportunities are especially designed for this program and are not intended to duplicate courses normally offered by graduate programs. On completion of a seminar or institute, participants will receive a certificate indicating their participation. Prior to completing an application to a specific seminar or institute, please review the letter/prospectus from the project director (available on the project’s website, or as an e-mail attachment) and consider carefully what is expected in terms of residence and attendance, reading and writing requirements, and general participation in the work of the project.

Each seminar includes 16 NEH Summer Scholars working in collaboration with one or two leading scholars. Participants will have access to a significant research collection, with time reserved to pursue individual research and study projects.

Institutes are for 25 Summer Scholars, and provide intensive collaborative study of texts, topics, and ideas central to undergraduate teaching in the humanities under the guidance of faculties distinguished in their fields of scholarship. Institutes aim to prepare participants to return to their classrooms with a deeper knowledge of current scholarship in key fields of the humanities.

Please note: The use of the words “seminar” or “institute” in this document is precise and is intended to convey differences between the two project types.

ELIGIBILITY

These projects are designed primarily for teachers of American undergraduate students. Qualified independent scholars and those employed by museums, libraries, historical societies, and other organizations may be eligible to compete provided they can effectively advance the teaching and research goals of the seminar or institute. Applicants must be United States citizens,
residents of U.S. jurisdictions, or foreign nationals who have been residing in the United States or its territories for at least the three years immediately preceding the application deadline. Foreign nationals teaching abroad at non-U.S. chartered institutions are not eligible to apply.

Please note: Up to two seminar spaces and three institute spaces are reserved for current full-time graduate students in the humanities.

Applicants must complete the NEH application cover sheet and provide all the information requested below to be considered eligible. An applicant need not have an advanced degree in order to qualify. Adjunct and part-time lecturers are eligible to apply. Individuals may not apply to study with a director of an NEH Summer Seminar or Institute who is a current colleague or a family member. Individuals must not apply to seminars directed by scholars with whom they have studied. Institute selection committees are advised that only under the most compelling and exceptional circumstances may an individual participate in an institute with a director or a lead faculty member who has guided that individual’s research or in whose previous institute or seminar he or she has participated.

Please note: An individual may apply to up to two projects in any one year (NEH Summer Seminars, Institutes or Landmarks Workshops for Community College Faculty), but may participate in only one.

SELECTION CRITERIA

A selection committee reads and evaluates all properly completed applications in order to select the most promising applicants and to identify a number of alternates. (Seminar selection committees typically consist of the project director and two colleagues. Institute selection committees typically consist of three to five members, usually drawn from the institute faculty and staff members.) While recent participants are eligible to apply, selection committees are charged to give first consideration to applicants who have not participated in an NEH-supported Seminar, Institute or Landmarks Workshop in the last three years (2008, 2009, 2010).

The most important consideration in the selection of participants is the likelihood that an applicant will benefit professionally. This is determined by committee members from the conjunction of several factors, each of which should be addressed in the application essay. These factors include:

1. quality and commitment as a teacher, scholar, and interpreter of the humanities;
2. intellectual interests, in general and as they relate to the work of the seminar or institute;
3. special perspectives, skills, or experiences that would contribute to the seminar or institute;
4. commitment to participate fully in the formal and informal collegial life of the seminar or institute;
5. the likelihood that the experience will enhance the applicant's teaching and scholarship; and
6. for seminars, the conception and organization of the applicant's independent project and its potential contribution to the seminar.
When choices must be made among equally qualified candidates, several additional factors are considered. **Preference is given to applicants who have not previously participated in an NEH Summer Seminar, Institute, or Landmarks Workshop, or who significantly contribute to the diversity of the seminar or institute.**

**STIPEND, TENURE, AND CONDITIONS OF AWARD**

Individuals selected to participate in six-week long projects will receive a stipend of $4,500; those in five-week projects will receive $3,900; those in four-week projects will receive $3,300; those in three-week projects will receive $2,700; and those in two-week projects will receive $2,100. Stipends are intended to help cover travel expenses to and from the project location, books and other research expenses, and living expenses for the duration of the period spent in residence. Stipends are taxable. **Applicants to all projects, especially those held abroad, should note that supplements will not be given in cases where the stipend is insufficient to cover all expenses.**

Seminar and institute participants are required to attend all meetings and to engage fully as professionals in the work of the project. During the project's tenure, they may not undertake teaching assignments or any other professional activities unrelated to their participation in the project. Participants who, for any reason, do not complete the full tenure of the project must refund a pro-rata portion of the stipend.

At the end of the project's residential period, participants will be asked to submit online evaluations in which they review their work during the summer and assess its value to their personal and professional development. These evaluations will become part of the project's grant file and may become part of an application to repeat the seminar or institute.

**APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

Before you attempt to complete an application, please obtain and read the “Dear Colleague Letter” from the director(s) of the project(s) to which you intend to apply: the letter contains detailed information about the topic under study, project requirements and expectations of the participants, the academic and institutional setting, and specific provisions for lodging and subsistence. In most cases, the “Dear Colleague Letter” can be found on the project’s website. **All application materials must be sent to the project director at the address listed in the "Dear Colleague Letter."** Application materials sent to the Endowment will not be reviewed.

**CHECKLIST OF APPLICATION MATERIALS**
A complete application consists of three copies of the following collated items:

- the completed application cover sheet,
- a detailed résumé, curriculum vitae, or brief biography, and
- an application essay as outlined below.

In addition, it must include two letters of recommendation as described below.

**The application cover sheet**
The application cover sheet must be filled out online at this address:

<http://www.neh.gov/online/education/participants/>

Please fill it out online as directed by the prompts. **When you are finished, be sure to click on the “submit” button.** Print out the cover sheet and add it to your application package. At this point you will be asked if you want to fill out a cover sheet for another project. If you do, follow the prompts and select another project and then print out the cover sheet for that project. Note that filling out a cover sheet is not the same as applying, so there is no penalty for changing your mind and filling out cover sheets for several projects. A full application consists of the items listed above, as sent to a project director.

**Résumé**
Please include a detailed résumé, curriculum vitae, or brief biography (not to exceed five pages).

**The Application Essay**
The application essay should be no more than four double spaced pages. This essay should include any relevant personal and academic information. It should address reasons for applying; the applicant's interest, both academic and personal, in the subject to be studied; qualifications and experiences that equip the applicant to do the work of the seminar or institute and to make a contribution to a learning community; a statement of what the applicant wants to accomplish by participating; and the relation of the project to the applicant's professional responsibilities.

- Applicants to seminars should be sure to discuss any independent study project that is proposed beyond the common work of the seminar.
- Applicants to institutes may need to elaborate on the relationship between institute activities and their responsibilities for teaching and curricular development.

**Reference Letters**
The two referees may be from inside or outside the applicant’s home institution. They should be familiar with the applicant's professional accomplishments or promise, teaching and/or research interests, and ability to contribute to and benefit from participation in the seminar or institute. Referees should be provided with the director's description of the seminar or institute and the applicant's essay. Applicants who are current graduate students should secure a letter from a
professor or advisor. Please ask each of your referees to sign across the seal on the back of the envelope containing the letter. Enclose the letters with your application.

**SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE**

Completed applications should be submitted to the project director and should be postmarked no later than March 1, 2011.

Successful applicants will be notified of their selection on Friday, April 1, 2011, and they will have until Tuesday, April 5 to accept or decline the offer.

Once you have accepted an offer to attend any NEH Summer Program (NEH Summer Seminar, Institute or Landmarks Workshop), you may not accept an additional offer or withdraw in order to accept a different offer.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT**

Endowment programs do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age. For further information, write to the Equal Opportunity Officer, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506. TDD: 202/606-8282 (this is a special telephone device for the Deaf).