



THE HOUSTON SEMINAR

FALL 2026



THE HOUSTON SEMINAR

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The Houston Seminar was founded in 1977 for the purpose of stimulating learning and cultural awareness. Each spring and fall the nonprofit group offers lectures and study tours focused on varied topics that may include art, architecture, literature, music, theater, history, politics, philosophy, psychology, religion, the natural environment, and current trends and events.

Fall 2026

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In-person Study Tour Daytime Evening



STUDY TOUR The Big Easy Study Tour of New Orleans

Thursday, October 22–Sunday, October 25

The Seminar will explore the rich history and vibrant food and music scene of New Orleans. Historians **Charles Chamberlain** and **Stephen Fox** have teamed up to guide us through the Creole culture—its architecture, music, cuisine, and literary influences. We will meet the chefs and musicians of today to learn about their current interpretations. New Orleans is an old story that always renews. Please join us!



houstonseminar.org

For trip pricing and further information, or to place your name on an interest list, please visit houstonseminar.org, email registrar@houstonseminar.org, or call 713-666-9000.



Christine LeVeaux-Haley

COURSES

What Would the Founding Fathers Think?

Wednesday, September 23, 10:00 A.M.–Noon. Private residence. Directions will be provided to subscribers. Limited enrollment.

As we mark the 250th Anniversary of the United States, we are experiencing and observing certain actions by the government that appear to counter what the Framers of the Constitution intended. Are the actions in line with the spirit of the founding documents and the founding of the nation? And how about the Bill of Rights? If we were to write a short note to the founders as we commemorate the establishment of the country, what would the status report look like? These and other questions will be discussed with **Christine LeVeaux-Haley**, a political science professor in the Honors College of the University of Houston.

A graduate of Spelman College with a PhD from Louisiana State University, Professor LeVeaux-Haley's teaching and research interests include legislative politics, Black politics, and political behavior. She has published in scholarly journals and appeared frequently as a political commentator on television.



Houston's Fifth Ward: 160 Years of Resilience

Friday, October 2, 9:30 A.M.–2:30 P.M. Directions will be provided to subscribers. Limited enrollment.

What do Barbara Jordan, George Foreman, Ruth Simmons, Joe Sample, and Mickey Leland have in common? Each started their lives in Houston's Fifth Ward and went on to achieve meteoric success. Meet today's movers and shakers, among them **Kathy Flanagan Payton** and **Harrison Guy**, and discover what makes Fifth Ward special.

Settled by freedmen, the Fifth Ward received its name in 1866 when the City of Houston claimed it. Initially, the community was evenly split between Black and white residents, with their corresponding schools and churches. Jobs on the railroad, the developing Ship Channel, and related business supported the growing population. Areas such as Frenchtown (fueled by the exodus from Louisiana after the devastating 1927 Mississippi River flood) and Kashmere Gardens became associated with Houston's music history. Architectural historian Stephen Fox wrote that "in the 1940s and '50s, it was one of the most vibrant sectors of Houston." Then, three factors contributed to the decline of the fortunes and desirability of the neighborhood: the construction of I-10 in the 1960s, followed by US-59, and the beginning of desegregation during the 1960s.



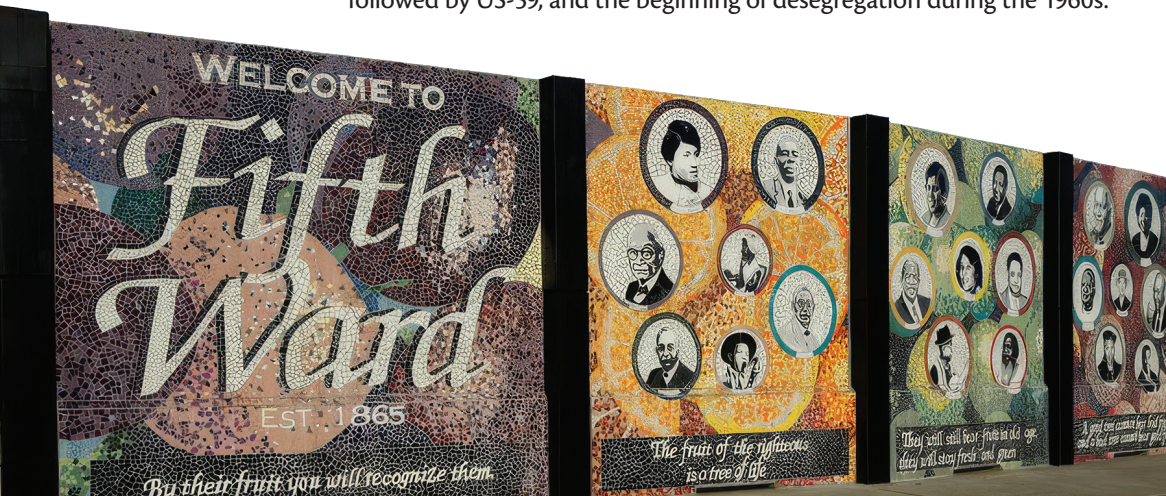
De Luxe Theater

In 1989, the nonprofit Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation (FWCRC) was established to invest in the people and infrastructure of the neighborhood. Today FWCRC is a nexus of community investment providing housing, career support, business and commercial development, and support for the arts. We will visit neighborhood institutions such as the De Luxe Theater, Julia C. Hester House, and St. Elizabeth's Place. In the recent past, St. Arnold's Brewery, Meow Wolf/Radio Tave, and the East River multi-use development have all sprung up on the edges of Fifth Ward, bringing attention to this often-overlooked community.

Kathy Flanagan Payton has served as the president and CEO of FWCRC since 1994. Harrison Guy is a dancer, choreographer, arts advocate, and director of arts and culture at the FWCRC.



St. Elizabeth's Place. Courtesy Van Meters Williams Pollack



Behind the Headlines: Russia, Venezuela, and Turkey

Three Tuesdays, October 6, 20, and 27, 6:00–7:30 P.M. Private residence. Directions will be provided to subscribers. Limited enrollment.

Behind the headlines, Russia, Venezuela, and Turkey reveal deeper stories about power, resilience, and political transformation. In Russia, the narrative extends beyond confrontation with the West to questions of national identity, demographic strain, economic adaptation under sanctions, and the centralization of authority under Vladimir Putin. Venezuela's crisis is not only a tale of economic collapse and hyperinflation, but also of institutional erosion, mass migration, and, under the leadership of acting president Delcy Rodríguez, a country seeking survival through strategic alliances and selective economic reforms. Meanwhile, Turkey's role has changed from a straightforward ally or adversary to an independent, complex regional actor. Under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan the country experienced further authoritarianism, democratic backsliding, and suppression of dissent. Looking behind the headlines, all three countries are widely regarded as significant geopolitical risks.

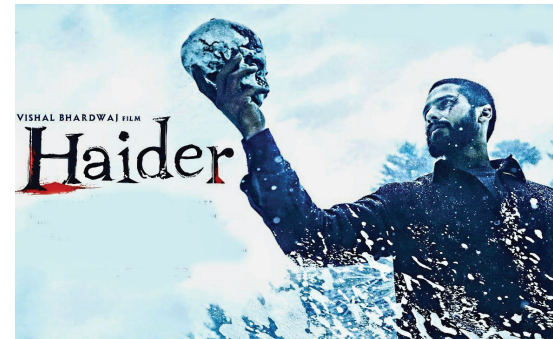


OCTOBER 6: Russia: From Imperial Echoes to Modern Power Politics
Alexey Golubev is a scholar of Russian history with a focus on social and cultural history of the twentieth century and additional expertise in transnational history and digital history. He completed his PhD in history at the University of British Columbia in 2016 and spent a year as a Banting Postdoctoral Scholar at the University of Toronto before joining the University of Houston's history department in fall 2017. During the academic year 2020–21, he was the Joy Foundation Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

OCTOBER 20: Venezuela: From Collapse to Contention
Francisco J. Monaldi is the Wallace S. Wilson Fellow in Latin American Energy Policy and director of the Latin America Energy Program at the Center for Energy Studies at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy. He is a leading scholar on the politics and economics of energy and resource policy in Latin America. He also studies institutions and resource wealth management in developing countries. Mr. Monaldi holds a PhD and an MA in political science from Stanford University, an MA in international and development economics from Yale University, and a BA in economics from Universidad Católica Andrés Bello.

OCTOBER 27: Turkey: From EU Aspirant to Independent Actor
Ali Yildirim is a postdoctoral fellow in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at the University of Houston. He earned his PhD in feminist studies from the University of Minnesota and earned his MA in cultural studies and a BA in television reporting and programming from Istanbul Bilgi University. Since his arrival in Houston in 2022, Mr. Yildirim has worked with students and faculty exploring the entangled

politics of sectarianism and sexuality in Turkey, with a particular focus on the culturally and politically marginalized ethnoreligious Alevi community.



Vishal Bhardwaj *Haider*



Franco Zeffirelli *Hamlet*

The Many Faces of Hamlet

Three Wednesdays, October 7, 14, and 21, 6:00–7:30 P.M. Rice University. Directions will be provided to subscribers.

What is *Hamlet*? A (failed) revenge tragedy? A political play? An existential drama? A vehicle for the culmination of a Shakespearean actor's career? The play that seems like it may never end? T.S. Eliot called *Hamlet* "the Mona Lisa of literature" marking it as intensely enigmatic and culturally iconic, but, ultimately, an artistic failure. Over three sessions, **Joseph Campana**, the William Shakespeare Professor of English at Rice University, will examine the many faces of *Hamlet* on the screen. What did Franco Zeffirelli, Kenneth Branagh, or Vishal Bhardwaj want from this mysterious if frustrating masterpiece? We will also consider moments when *Hamlet* is present even when absent—through allusion or parody—or even when *Hamlet* is the backdrop for other dramas, as in Maggie O'Farrell's novel *Hamnet* and Chloé Zhao's film adaptation.

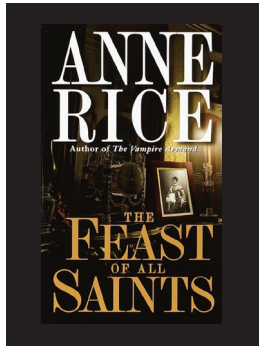
Joseph Campana is a poet, arts writer, and scholar of early modern English and European literature and culture and the environmental humanities. In addition to his named chair in the English department, he is director of the Center for Environmental Studies at Rice University. Professor Campana is the author of two scholarly monographs: *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (Fordham University Press, 2012) and *Shakespeare's Once and Future Child: Speculations on Sovereignty* (University of Chicago Press, 2025). He is the author of three collections of poetry: *The Book of Faces* (Graywolf, 2005), *Natural Selections* (2012), which received the Iowa Poetry Prize, and *The Book of Life* (Tupelo, 2019) and is contributing editor at *Plume* for which he writes a monthly column. Professor Campana has also served as an arts writer and critic for web and print publications (including *CultureMap*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Kenyon Review*, and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*) covering theater, dance, visual arts, television, books, and more.



Chloé Zhao *Hamnet*



©Emma Fick



Literary New Orleans

Tuesday, October 13, 6:00–7:30 P.M. Private residence. Directions will be provided to subscribers. Limited enrollment.

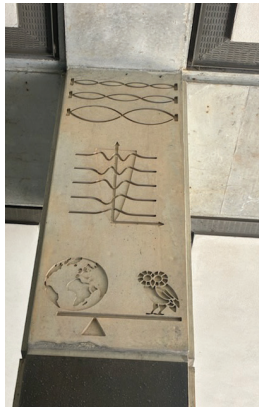
In this third and final session of “Literary New Orleans,” **Logan Browning** will examine Anne Rice’s *The Feast of All Saints*, an extraordinary historical novel set in early nineteenth-century New Orleans. Spoiler alert: There are no vampires in the novel. New Orleans is also notable for the number of cocktail recipes that have originated there. During the class, we will enjoy one of those libations to encourage our own creative attempts to understand the literary fascination with the “Accidental City,” the Big Easy, the Big Sleazy, NOLA, or just plain old New Orleans.

Logan Browning is a specialist in Victorian literature and publishing history; a contributor to the *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Charles Dickens*, the *Oxford Handbook on Dickens*, and other scholarly journals and reference works; and a faculty member of the Dickens Universe, housed at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His current research also includes the study of writing in and about New Orleans.

An Architectural Walking Tour of Rice University

Monday, November 2, 9:00 A.M.–Noon. (Rain date: Monday, November 9, 9:00 A.M.–Noon). Rice University, 6100 Main, 77005. Parking information will be provided to subscribers. Limited enrollment.

What does Ralph Adams Cram’s neo-Byzantine creation from 1912 have in common with the reinterpretation of a Butler building by Charles Renfro in 2025? They can both be found on Rice University’s campus! Rice’s architectural story spans more than a century beginning with its first building known as Lovett Hall—clad in pink Texas granite, gray



Ozark marble, and rose-colored Houston brick—and extending into this century with structures such as the new home for Rice’s visual arts programs, Sarofim Hall, comprising a contemporary mix of concrete, exposed steel, glass, and sustainable bamboo.

Explore Rice University through the eyes of **Stephen Fox** as we traverse the campus following its architectural history from the days of its founding to its current construction surge. Sturdy shoes, sun protection, and a personal water bottle are recommended for this sustained walking tour.

Stephen Fox is an architectural historian, author, and lecturer at the Rice University School of Architecture. He is also a lecturer at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture at the University of Houston and a fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas. Mr. Fox’s focus is on architecture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially that of Houston and Texas, and he often analyzes the intersection of architecture and the social, cultural, and economic history of Houston.



Lovett Hall arcade



Lovett Hall ©Jörg Dietrich



Top: The Gutenberg Bible
Left: Papyrus amulet with an illustration of a crocodile, Egypt, ca. 100 BCE-100 CE. Courtesy Harry Ransom Center



Wednesday, November 4, 8:00 A.M.-10:00 P.M.
Transportation, lunch, and dinner will be provided to subscribers.

Join us as we travel by coach to Austin to view the Landmarks public art collection on loan to the University of Texas from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. We will be accompanied by Houston gallerists **Hiram Butler** and **Josh Pazda**, of Josh Pazda Hiram Butler, who will speak about the development of the Landmarks program, sharing an exhibition catalog with each participant. Upon arrival at the UT campus, **Andrée Bober**, Landmarks founding director and curator, will join the group for a walking tour of the public art installation. The group will enjoy a picnic lunch followed by a visit to the rare manuscript collection at the Harry Ransom Center as well as the Ellsworth Kelly chapel at the Blanton Museum of Art. Dinner will be followed by a visit to the *The Color Inside*, James Turrell's Skyspace installation, and the Ben Rubin light piece *And That's The Way It Is*. Enjoy a relaxing ride back to Houston with snacks, beverages, and conversation. Please be prepared for a full day of sustained walking over uneven terrain.



Ellsworth Kelly Austin
Courtesy Overland Partners

Ben Rubin *And That's The Way It Is*
©Paul Bardagjy



The Eyes of Texas Are on Art

James Turrell Skyspace *The Color Inside*. Courtesy Overland Partners

Hem and Her: American Female Designers at the HCC Fashion Archives

Ann Lowe

Claire McCardell



Saturday, November 14, 10:00 A.M.–Noon. Houston City College Fashion Building, 3601 Fannin, 77004.

Often overlooked, American women fashion designers have pioneered an empowering aesthetic, often focusing on practicality and function, that redefined global style for women and brought America to the forefront of fashion, moving beyond European couture. Key designers such as Claire McCardell and Ann Lowe shaped the "American Look" and paved the way for modern designers such as Diane von Furstenberg and Vera Wang. Led by HCC fashion archive ambassador and fashion department professor **Alexander Chapman** and librarian/archivist **Denise Hulett**, the presentation will delve into the female designers who helped create American women's fashion.

Courtesy Smithsonian

Courtesy Maryland Center for History and Culture

Courtesy Smithsonian



Discounts

Teachers and students with a school I.D. may attend classes for a discounted fee. Please call the registrar for details.

Refunds

For refund requests that occur at least two weeks before a course begins, a 20% cancellation fee will be charged. If others have been turned away from a limited-enrollment course, no refund will be issued unless your place can be filled. Refund policies for courses involving travel will differ.

Enrollment

All courses are available on a first-come, first-served basis. You may enroll by mail, email, phone, or online.

Gift Certificates

These are available for a single session, a specific course, or a dollar amount, which the recipient may apply toward any course(s). Please call for more information.

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PLEASE ENROLL ME/US IN THE FOLLOWING COURSES:

The Big Easy Study Tour of New Orleans Thursday, October 22–Sunday, October 25	For trip pricing and further information, or to place your name on an interest list, please visit houstonseminar.org , email registrar@houstonseminar.org , or call 713-666-9000.
What Would the Founding Fathers Think? Wednesday, September 23, 10:00 A.M.–Noon., \$45	<input type="checkbox"/> September 23
Houston's Fifth Ward: 160 Years of Resilience Friday, October 2, 9:30 A.M.–2:30 P.M., \$175	<input type="checkbox"/> October 2
Behind the Headlines: Russia, Venezuela, and Turkey Three Tuesdays, October 6, 20, and 27, 6:00–7:30 P.M., \$45 per session	<input type="checkbox"/> October 6 <input type="checkbox"/> October 20 <input type="checkbox"/> October 27
The Many Faces of Hamlet Three Wednesdays, October 7, 14, and 21, 6:00–7:30 P.M., \$40 per session	<input type="checkbox"/> October 7 <input type="checkbox"/> October 14 <input type="checkbox"/> October 21
Literary New Orleans Tuesday, October 13, 6:00–7:30 P.M., \$60	<input type="checkbox"/> October 13
An Architectural Walking Tour of Rice University Monday, November 2, 9:00 A.M.–Noon., \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> November 2
The Eyes of Texas Are on Art Wednesday, November 4, 8:00 A.M.–10:00 P.M., \$300	<input type="checkbox"/> November 4
Hem and Her: American Female Designers at the HCC Fashion Archives Saturday, November 14, 10:00 A.M.–Noon., \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> November 14

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Course List and Reservation Form



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THE HOUSTON SEMINAR

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Study Tour

The Big Easy Study Tour of New Orleans

Daytime

What Would the Founding Fathers Think?

Houston's Fifth Ward: 160 Years of Resilience

An Architectural Walking Tour of Rice University

The Eyes of Texas Are on Art

Hem and Her: American Female Designers at the HCC Fashion Archives

Evening

Behind the Headlines: Russia, Venezuela, and Turkey

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Literary New Orleans

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