

“PENNONI PANELS”

PANELIST BIOS



Dr. Paula Marantz Cohen will serve as today's moderator. She is a Distinguished Professor of English and Dean of the Pennoni Honors College at Drexel University. She is the author of many non-fiction books, including, most recently, *Of Human Kindness: What Shakespeare Teaches Us about Empathy* (Yale UP, 2021) and *Talking Cure: An Essay on the Civilizing Power of Conversation* (Princeton, 2023). She's also written six novels, among them, the bestselling *Jane Austen in Boca* and the Mystery Guild selection *What Alice Knew: A Most Curious Tale of Henry James and Jack the Ripper*. Cohen holds a BA in French and English from Yale College and a PhD in English Literature from Columbia University.



Dr. Andrew Delbanco is Alexander Hamilton Professor of American Studies at Columbia University and president of the Teagle Foundation. His most recent book, *The War Before the War: Fugitive Slaves and the Struggle for America's Soul* (2018), a *New York Times* notable book, was awarded the Anisfield-Wolf prize for "books that have made important contributions to our understanding of racism

and human diversity," the Lionel Trilling Award, and the Mark Lynton History Prize, sponsored by the Columbia Journalism School and the Nieman Foundation at Harvard, for a work "of history, on any subject, that best combines intellectual or scholarly distinction with felicity of expression." Among his other books, *Melville: His World and Work* (Knopf, 2005) was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize in biography. *College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be* (Princeton University Press, 2012; 2d edition 2023), has been translated into several languages. His essays appear in *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Nation*, and other periodicals, on topics ranging from American literature and history to contemporary issues in higher education. Mr. Delbanco earned his AB, AM, and PhD degrees from Harvard University. He has been a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 2001. That same year he was named "America's Best Social Critic" by *Time Magazine*. In 2006 he was honored with the Great Teacher Award by the Society of Columbia Graduates, and in 2013 he was elected to the American Philosophical Society. In 2012, he was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Barack Obama. In 2021 and 2022 he served as president of the Society of American Historians. In 2022, he delivered the Jefferson Lecture, "the highest honor the federal government bestows for distinguished intellectual achievement in the humanities."



Dr. Phillip Magness is a senior fellow at the Independent Institute and the David J. Theroux Chair in Political Economy. He holds a PhD from George Mason University's School of Public Policy, and has taught economics and public policy at institutions including GMU, American University, Berry College, and Universidad Francisco Marroquin. He is the co-author, along with Jason Brennan of

Cracks in the Ivory Tower: The Moral Mess of Higher Education (Oxford



Photo by R. Dione Foto

Dr. Dana A. Williams is professor of African American literature and Dean of the Graduate School at Howard University. She is currently president of the Modern Language Association and co-Executive Director, with Lakshmi Krishnan, of the Georgetown-Howard Center for the Medical Humanities and Health Justice, a Mellon Foundation initiative.



Laurie Zierer is executive director of PA Humanities. Zierer strategically focuses on using the humanities to build community, foster learning, and make meaningful change in Pennsylvania. With community partners in Chester, Pennsylvania, Zierer launched nationally-recognized Chester Made, a humanities-based initiative to promote arts and culture and to harness their power as a

force for community revitalization. Animating Democracy/American for the Arts found the initiative to be "an informative and valuable test ... of applied humanities." Also under Zierer's leadership, PA Humanities partnered with the Orton Family Foundation with PA Heart & Soul civic engagement grants for communities across Pennsylvania. They support humanities-focused approaches to community planning and development. In addition, PA Humanities expanded its award-winning Teen Reading Lounge program to diversify its reach and coach facilitators through the new Youth-Led Humanities initiative. Teens who take part in this interactive, nontraditional book club report stronger interpersonal, communication, literacy, and critical-thinking skills—and increased confidence. Much of her recent work centers on participatory research grounded in emergent learning theory. Examples include: PA Culture-Check, an annual survey of the state's cultural sector; PA Humanities Discovery Project, a statewide initiative with Drexel University to map, network, and celebrate the humanities ecosystem; and *Humanities in Action: A National Perspective*, a report conducted with Penn Praxis to examine how the humanities are contributing to civic engagement, creative placemaking, and community development across the nation. Believing strongly in putting research into action and using the humanities as a catalyst for transformation, Zierer has spearheaded innovative, data-informed grantmaking programs like Wingspan in 2023. This initiative supports BIPOC-led and rural organizations doing community-based humanities work, helping them to soar and expand their possibilities by providing new resources, amplifying their voices, and cultivating space for creativity and connection. Zierer holds a BA in English from Temple University and an MA in rhetoric from Penn State. Her recent scholarly contributions to the applied humanities include "Learning as We Go: How Emergent Process Supports Sustainable Community and Philanthropic Change" in *The Foundation Review* (2022) and "Humanities in Action: Centering the Human in Public Humanities Work" in *Graduate Education for a Thriving Humanities Ecosystem* (2023).



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