Energizing Humanities in California’s San Joaquin Valley is a $100,000, three-year grant project from interdisciplinary humanities perspectives promoting cultural competency in humanities instruction at Bakersfield College. The grant is funded as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities’ Humanities Initiatives at Community Colleges program, and it is directed by Professors Oliver Rosales, Andrew Bond, and Josh Ottum.

About the Project

Complementing the local legacy of energy production, Energizing Humanities in California’s San Joaquin Valley examines the concept of energy broadly from historical and literary perspectives, as well as the intersection of humanities with music/performing arts. Historically, the southern San Joaquin Valley has been an epicenter of labor and civil rights activism in California and beyond throughout the twentieth century, stemming especially from the broad impact of the farm labor movement at the state and national levels. The region too has been a powerful landscape for literary production and narratives of self and place, as well as music and cultural performance. This project holistically explores the overlap, interchange, and commingling intersection of history, literature, and the arts.

The grant’s programming will examine recent scholarship in the area of California’s diverse agricultural history. Topics will include the origins of agribusiness, organized labor, the significance of undocumented migrant labor, and the farm labor movement’s broad impact on political and economic development in California and beyond. Central California’s diverse energy economy has also provided a rich template for literary production. We will also analyze the intersection between California’s energy and agricultural economies and literary landscapes, including the context of the Dust Bowl migration, ethnic Mexican communities, and Asian immigration. Our work will also address topics regarding energy humanities using lenses of sound and music which amplify histories and critical issues facing the region.

The first two years will include summer bridge programs targeting area high school seniors from migrant backgrounds transitioning to Bakersfield College. These summer bridge programs will provide place-based pedagogical models and local cultural resources to energize humanities instruction for BC Faculty.

A regional conference highlighting faculty pedagogical innovation, student panels, as well as keynote speakers, will conclude the grant project. A performance based on student testimonials/writings and music/sound design collected from the first two project years’ summer bridge programs will supplement the closing conference.

2017-18 Faculty Fellows

Octavio Barajas
History
Bakersfield College

Sarah Baron
Nursing
Bakersfield College

Allison Burch
Library
Porterville College

Christine Cruz-Boone
Communication
Bakersfield College-Rural Sites

Pam Boyles
English
Bakersfield College

Chris Dison
English
Bakersfield College-Delano

Matthew Garrett
History
Bakersfield College

Ishmael Kimbrough, III
History
Bakersfield College

Rae Ann Kumelos
English
Bakersfield College

Kristen Mercer
English
Bakersfield College

Laura Peet
English
Bakersfield College

Anna Poetker
Philosophy
Bakersfield College

Bryan Russel
Philosophy
Bakersfield College

Naomi Rutuku
English
Bakersfield College

Isaac Sanchez
English
Bakersfield College

Carol Shertzer
Economics
Bakersfield College-Delano

Elisabeth Sundby
Library
Bakersfield College-Delano

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