

Mellon Foundation Grant Funds New, Innovative and Community-Engaging Courses at New College of Florida

SARASOTA, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, December 20, 2022 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- A Mellon Foundation grant has funded the development of six new courses at New College - five being offered to students in spring, 2023.

“For a public liberal arts college like New College, grants from private donors such as the Mellon Foundation allow us to extend our resources, create new opportunities for students and faculty, and increase our community impact. We are incredibly excited that the Mellon grant’s promotion of college-community partnerships is resulting in innovative learning experiences for students, faculty, and community members alike,” said Dr. Maneesha Lal, NCF Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs.



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*Dr. Maneesha Lal, NCF
Assistant Vice President for
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New College is proud to receive the Mellon grant, supporting curricular and research initiatives that preserve local history, integrate social and racial justice work into artistic practice and teaching, and explore questions of special interest to the local community. Last spring, a call for course proposals was sent to NCF faculty and to [Cross College Alliance institutions](#) (New College of Florida, Ringling College of Art and Design, The Ringling/Florida State University, University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, and State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota). Of nine proposals received, six community-based projects were awarded funding. Faculty and community partners

met over the last several months to design and plan the course content, logistics, and learning

outcomes. The six courses are:



> Devised Theatre and Collaboration for Social Engagement: Developed by NCF Professor Diego Villada and FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training Professor Eliza Ladd, this

course will instruct undergraduate students in the techniques of Devised Theatre, a process of creating new work without a pre-existing script. Students and faculty will collaborate with artists from the CreArte Latino Cultural Center to generate an original theatre piece that incorporates stories from the Florida Gulf Coast's Latinx community. The performance will be presented in three local venues.

> Museum Studies in Theory and Practice: Students in this iteration of NCF Professor Katherine Brion's introduction to museum studies course will have the opportunity to apply what they learn about museum theory to a hands-on interdisciplinary project relevant to museum careers. With additional support from Dr. David Berry, Chief Museum Curator for Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, students in Professor Brion's class will collaborate with Professor Heidi Harley's class (see below) in the development of an exhibition centered on dolphin research. The goal is to establish a model for presenting scholarly and creative activity occurring at New College in a manner that engages local communities.

> New Stories, New College: An Interdisciplinary Laboratory Showcasing Community Science/Conservation through Curatorial Interpretation and Interactive Design: Students in NCF Professor Heidi Harley's course will work with instructors from the Chicago Zoological Society's Sarasota Dolphin Research Program to study dolphins from multiple perspectives, and, in collaboration with Professor Katherine Brion's class, will translate dolphin science into an interactive exhibit for lay audiences. Using tested methods of museum exhibit design, students will create a process that can serve as a prototype for future exhibits that seek to draw the public onto the NCF campus.

> Growing Up Amish in Sarasota: This course will be a collaboration between NCF Professor of Religion Manuel Lopez and a member of the local Mennonite community, JB Miller. Students will consult with representatives from the Amish community to explore the history, religious practices, and economic role of the Amish in Sarasota since their arrival in 1925. Offered alongside the course will be a public talk by widely recognized scholar of Anabaptism Steven Nolt as well as a photographic exhibition by local Amish photographer Katie Troyer.

> Exploring Local Microbes Through Community Media Projects: Taught by NCF Professor Erika Diaz Almeyda along with 12 community-partner guest speakers, this laboratory course will introduce students to microbes through a community-based, place-based lens. The final projects will use local data on the diversity of microbes and document local microbial histories via

photography, artwork, and texts to create a multi-media exhibition.

> Heritage: Theory and Practice for the Sarasota African American Historical and Cultural Center: This course, to be co-taught by NCF Professor Uzi Baram and Vickie Oldham, President and CEO of the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition (SAACC), will contribute to creating a historical and cultural center for Sarasota. Students will draw upon African American heritage studies, oral history, anthropology, and museum studies as they participate in the early visioning of this new cultural institution and help develop exhibits and curate content for displays.

Developed through faculty collaborations with diverse community partners, these courses will help students learn about community priorities and provide them with hands-on learning experiences. Students will better understand the place in which they live, make meaningful connections with local leaders, and share their research and insights for mutual benefit.

“The larger hope is that through such community-engaged learning, students will enlarge their sense of civic responsibility and purpose,” Lal said. “New College of Florida is committed to its public mission and these partnerships help us continue to serve as a vital resource in our community.”

About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation:

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation’s largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive.

More on [New College Mellon Foundation](https://www.ncf.edu/ncf-events/mellon/) events. <https://www.ncf.edu/ncf-events/mellon/>

Founded in Sarasota in 1960, New College of Florida is a top-ranked public liberal arts college and the Honors College of Florida. New College provides students with limitless, original opportunities for success through a highly individualized education that integrates academic rigor with career-building experiences. New College offers more than 50 undergraduate majors in arts, humanities and sciences; a master’s degree program in data science; and certificates in technology, finance, and business skills.

Allyson Blinkhorn
New College of Florida
+1 941-487-4157
ablinkhorn@ncf.edu

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