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THE HARVARD MELLON URBAN INITIATIVE ANNOUNCES 29 GRANTS TO ADVANCE STUDENT RESEARCH IN URBAN STUDIES

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The Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative is pleased to announce the [award of 29 grants](#) for undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and fellows through Harvard to pursue urban-focused research projects. They explore urban conditions and transformations across cultures and geographies and through multiple critical and disciplinary lenses. The student grants support independent and collective research in archives, online data sets and other digital resources, as well as more experimental projects connected to exhibitions and site-based interventions. The faculty awards create opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to work closely with mentors on research projects as well as on the development of teaching materials. The awards provide funding up to \$2,500 per project. The research can be conducted in the Spring semester and/or Summer of 2021.

The grantees are based in various departments or programs in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, including American Studies, Anthropology, Art, Film, and Visual Studies, Economics, History, Government, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Sociology) as well as in the Graduate School of Design, the Harvard Kennedy School, and the Graduate School of Education. They collectively reflect the breadth and diversity of urban-focused research and teaching across Harvard. The topics and questions they engage and the approaches they use to explore them are equally wide ranging and diverse.

Several projects engage in innovative strategies for disseminating scholarship to a wider public. They include undergraduates collaborating on a website on the effects of prison gerrymandering; a digital map of the intertwined histories of abolitionism and industrialization in Springfield, MA; and a social media archive of community-based learning spaces designed and implemented by Black communities.

Spatial investigations of the built and natural environments will produce an array of data visualization projects, such as a digital booklet drawing on the connections between traditional supply chains and food sovereignty in Mexico City; links between race, inequality, and land ownership patterns in the United States; and explorations of relationships between redlining and public utilities investment.

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Some grants will support contributions to curricula, at Harvard and beyond. These range from a critical anthology, designed for teaching, of literary representations of China's impacts on Latin American urban imaginaries, to the creation of course materials for a music after-school program in Nashville, TN. Another project with implications for teaching will produce a literary mapping of works set in the Twin Cities, beginning with the novels of Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich.

Many projects adopt imaginative, mixed-method approaches with the aim of impacting policy discussions, including improvements to public transportation in Jakarta; community-centered approaches to safety in U.S. public housing developments; and an examination of the consequences of climate-induced displacement to welfare and urbanization in Bangladesh.

Grants will also help to enrich dissertations and publications with dynamic visual and online components, such as an interactive map to aid our understanding of migration patterns and political landscapes of urban centers in the early 1900s, and maps that represent the impact of unions and neighborhood-based organizations on the distribution of urban public goods in São Paulo and Johannesburg.

The grant program is part of the larger mission of the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative to advance new cross disciplinary approaches to the study of urban environments, societies, and cultures. The Initiative's goals include developing sustained research projects that incorporate new visual and digital methods in the study of urban environments, contributing to the Harvard curriculum, producing publications and exhibitions, and generating a wide variety of urban studies programming and community-building. The Initiative intends to pave the way to an interdisciplinary secondary field in urban studies for Harvard students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

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