

Call for Proposals

Educating for the Unknown: Liberal Arts in the Age of Climate Change

The Twenty-First Annual *Conversation on the Liberal Arts*
March 2–4, 2023
Westmont College
Santa Barbara, California
Sponsored by the Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts

The Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts is pleased to announce the twenty-first annual *Conversation on the Liberal Arts*, “Educating for the Unknown: Liberal Arts in the Age of Climate Change,” to be held March 2-4, 2023 on the campus of Westmont College, Santa Barbara, CA.

As students imagine their futures, they are keenly aware that they will inherit a world that is changing rapidly and dramatically. Already the physical effects of global climate change—especially fires, droughts, floods, and freezes—are threatening established patterns of life. And the social effects of those changes might prove more disruptive still, as climate-related migration, political turmoil, economic instability, infrastructural collapse, and other developments threaten to upend the future that our colleges and universities are preparing students for.

These realities should inform how we teach and learn. They should provoke action in the natural sciences, but also in our habits of moral reasoning. They should spur us to technological innovation, but also to new modes of psychological and sociological self-understanding. They should produce more sustainable industries, but also more trenchant histories, economic theories, political philosophies, and works of art. Education for adaptability, for broad and deep empathy with other people, for genuine placement and embodiment—to name just a few possibilities—will be crucial as we encounter the challenges entailed by the coming changes. In what ways does a liberal arts education equip people to engage these tasks or inhabit these values? How should liberal education itself adapt to these changes? What roles do teachers, students, and administrators have to play in discovering a livable future?

The twenty-first *Conversation on the Liberal Arts* will gather scholars, administrators, students, and practitioners to consider these questions and more. Specific themes might include:

- **Psychological Resiliency:** How students and educators can sustain a sense of meaning, direction, and hope in the midst of disruption;
- **Vocational Adaptability:** How colleges and universities can prepare students for a job market in rapid flux, and whether “vocation” and “work” should be significantly reframed;
- **Curricular Strategy:** How institutions can structure learning in ways that anticipate and account for uncertainty;
- **Interdisciplinary Vision:** How scholars and teachers can collaborate across specialties to address holistically the challenges of a changing world;
- **Personal and Social Perspective:** How age, race, gender, social location, or other facets of identity inform response to our climate future and its consequences;
- **Moral and Spiritual Engagement:** How ideas about the good life, or justice, or religious faith interact with the existential questions of our global moment.

Who should attend?

The *Conversation on the Liberal Arts* is designed to include a broad diversity of voices; our hope is that insight and change occur at the confluence of our various perspectives. We welcome attendees and contributors from different kinds of institutions (liberal arts colleges, research universities, religious and secular schools, nonprofit organizations, and

more), different institutional roles (teachers, scholars, administrators, student life professionals, graduate or undergraduate students, practitioners in relevant non-educational fields, and others), and the broadest range of academic specialties and professional expertise. Anyone who has an interest in the value and practice of liberal education is warmly invited to join the conversation.

Format

One of the highlights of the *Conversation on the Liberal Arts*, as the name suggests, is the rich discussion it promotes. Plenary sessions include full-length paper presentations and extended times of conversation. Concurrent sessions are devoted primarily to open discussion of papers, which are distributed in advance. We ask concurrent authors to give very brief (3-5 minute) précis of their work, leaving most of the time for unscripted interaction.

Submissions

Please submit a 350-word abstract to libarts@westmont.edu. All standard academic citation and formatting styles will be accepted, but Chicago is preferred. Be sure to include: 1) First author's full name, academic rank or job title, name of institution or organization, and contact information—mail, phone, and email; 2) Full names, ranks or titles, and institutions/organizations of all co-authors; 3) Title of abstract. All student work should be clearly identified as such. The deadline for submitting a proposal is November 30, 2022. If accepted, full papers should be submitted by January 31, 2023. Please contact Aaron Sizer (asizer@westmont.edu, 805-565-6124) with any questions.

For more information about the *Conversation on the Liberal Arts*, visit
westmont.edu/conversation.