

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Donald Solomon

National Humanities Center

919-549-0661

[dsolomon@nationalhumanitiescenter.org](mailto:dsolomon@nationalhumanitiescenter.org)

**NATIONAL HUMANITIES CENTER LAUNCHES NEW SITE ON  
ADVANCES IN UNDERSTANDING “THE HUMAN”**

*Online Resource for Teachers Involves Experts from Many Fields*

**WHAT:** The National Humanities Center (NHC) has recently launched *On the Human* ([www.onthehuman.org](http://www.onthehuman.org)), a website designed by and for a community of university professors teaching courses on humans and their relations to animals and machines.

*On the Human* supports an online network of scholars in the humanities, sciences, and engineering disciplines discussing central questions of human existence. The site enables them to develop and disseminate cutting-edge introductory courses on the question of the human and to work among institutions and across disciplines to develop materials for classes from medical ethics to microcomputing, from art to zoology.

This site is supported by a grant from the Teagle Foundation.

**WHO:** *On the Human* builds on the intellectual momentum surrounding the NHC’s three-year initiative “Autonomy, Singularity, Creativity: The Human and the Humanities” (ASC) which attracted the participation of many of the world’s leading minds from the sciences and the humanities in an extensive dialogue on controversial issues emerging about “the human” within and among their disciplines.

These discussions will now extend to a wider audience online as many of these experts take turns as guest commentators in regular open forums about controversial issues on the site. Experts already scheduled for the site’s forums include:

<u>Commentator</u>	<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Ian Hacking	Philosophy	University of Toronto
John Doris	Philosophy	Univ. of Washington – St. Louis
Katherine Hayles	Literature	Duke University
Peter Galison	History of Science	Harvard University
Willard McCarty	Humanities Computing	King’s College London
Dan Batson	Psychology	University of Kansas
Raymond Tallis	Geriatric Medicine	University of Manchester
Joseph Carroll	English	Univ. of Missouri – St. Louis

Patrick Bateson	Ethology	Cambridge University
Mark Stoneking	Molecular Anthropology	Max Planck Institute
Paul Rabinow	Anthropology	Univ. of California – Berkeley
Tim Lenoir	Visual Studies	Duke University
Michael Gillespie	Political Science	Duke University
Mark Turner	Cognitive Science	Case Western Reserve University
Connie Rosati	Philosophy	University of Arizona
Holden Thorp	Chemistry	Univ. of N. Carolina – Chapel Hill
Terrence Deacon	Biological Anthropology	University of California – Berkeley

*On the Human's* editor in chief is Gary Comstock, professor of philosophy at NC State University and ASC Fellow at the National Humanities Center, 2007-09. A researcher interested in ethical questions in the biological sciences, Comstock has written extensively on genetically modified foods and is currently working on a project exploring the central dogma of the humanities, that humans are singular among and superior to other life forms. Comstock wrote *Vexing Nature?*, a book on the controversy surrounding the engineering of natural and agricultural lands. He also edited *Life Science Ethics, Religious Autobiographies, and Is There a Moral Obligation to Save the Family Farm?*; and helped to establish the Bioethics Institute, a faculty development workshop that helped five hundred scientists around the world integrate discussions of ethics into their courses.

Managing Editor for *On the Human*, Phillip Barron, is a digital media specialist at the National Humanities Center. He holds an MA in philosophy and was project coordinator and website developer for the National Humanities Center's ASC initiative.

**WHEN/  
WHERE:** *On the Human* will launch on March 30, 2009, with philosopher Ian Hacking discussing the ways genetic technologies are changing our conceptions of personal identity. Ask him *your* question next week—March 30 to April 3—at [www.onthehuman.org](http://www.onthehuman.org).

**HOW:** Modeled on the online resources developed by the National Humanities Center's professional training programs for teachers, *On the Human* incorporates cutting-edge web tools and best practices to provide a host of resources for educators as well as foster lively conversation on emerging topics. Specific areas of the site include:

1. [OpenSeminar On the Human](#) (OSOH) —a collaborative, inter-institutional, open-access, asynchronous undergraduate course. It includes a model syllabus of structured readings and interactive exercises, a suite of alternative approaches, calendar, videos, discussion questions, podcasts and a dedicated Facebook group. All resources are publicly accessible.

Students may take it free of charge and instructors may open, modify, and teach their own section free of charge. Easy to use, cost-effective, and adaptable, the course is designed to serve the needs of those who may lack explicit training in this interdisciplinary area.

2. [Teaching Resources](#) gathers pedagogical strategies, links, and suggestions for success in the classroom. “How-to” papers reflect on the experiences of instructors who are alums of the National Humanities Center’s Human Nature seminars. Viewers are also invited to send links to the bibliography.

3. [Current Controversies](#) will be an interactive forum providing free and open access to leading experts on persons and the quasi-persons who surround them. This forum will explore issues in metaphysics and biology, ethics and neuroscience, experimental philosophy and evolutionary psychology. Commentators post 1000 words in "Current Controversies" on a Monday of their choice and remain available for 5 days to respond to comments from any viewer. The list includes renowned geneticists, ethologists, computer scientists, philosophers, historians, and literary theorists:

4. [In the News](#) points to exciting new developments in research. We monitor a diversity of media sources and fields ranging from philosophy to biology, psychology, anthropology, and artificial intelligence, among others. Our links encompass scholarly and popular stories.

5. [Guiding Papers](#) provides introductory, orienting essays. Written by various members of the *OTH* community, the articles describe the research interests of the authors as well as the way each one construes our subjects.

**CONTACT:** For more information please contact Don Solomon, Director of Communications at the National Humanities Center, (919) 549-0661; [dsolomon@nationalhumanitiescenter.org](mailto:dsolomon@nationalhumanitiescenter.org).