

The University Seminars Town Hall
August 31, 2022

HOSTS

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AGENDA

- Covid policies and seminar meetings in the fall and this year
- Seminars returning to in-person and hybrid meetings
- Office changes
- Travel arrangements and reimbursements
- Guidelines
- Questions

Pamela opens the Town Hall with a greeting and shares her screen to review the agenda.

COVID POLICIES

Covid polices are set by the University and are the same as were in place last year.

- Columbia affiliates are required to be fully vaccinated and boosted. Or, they must have a green pass on the reopen CU app.
- Non-affiliates are required to be vaccinated. A booster is not required.
- Masking is not required in meetings; however, The University Seminars office strongly advises that members wear masks while gathering inside.

In keeping with the philosophy of The Seminars, individual groups can decide their COVID policies (worded as strong suggestions) as only Columbia's policy is enforceable.

Columbia University reserves the right to change policies regarding in person gathering with little to no notice and The University Seminars office reserves this right as well.

Q: How do we, as a seminar, go about making sure that people are vaccinated and boosted?

A: Individual seminars and rapporteurs will have to enforce the University vaccination policy.

Some suggestions are:

Seminars can ask everyone to submit an image of their vaccination card over email in advance of the semester. Seminars can ask everyone to submit an image of their vaccination card over email in advance of each meeting. Seminars can ask everyone to submit an image of their

vaccination card over email for only new members and speakers prior to the meeting. Rapporteurs can check vaccination cards at the door.

SEMINARS RETURNING TO IN-PERSON AND HYBRID MEETINGS

This is the first semester most seminars are meeting in Faculty House in two years. Our office is in the process of training new and returning rapporteurs on how to meet in-person, navigate Faculty House, arrange dinners, and operate the new technology.

To welcome seminars back, The University Seminars office will pay for the first four dinners for every seminar.

OFFICE CHANGES

We are short staffed. Please be flexible. We are no longer working with Emerald Currie of Faculty House, so arranging rooms and allocating technology is a little slower. John Jayo, our Administrative Assistant has left for Harvard. We are going to be hiring work-study students for the fall and we hope to hire a new Administrative Assistant mid-September.

NOTE: Travel arrangements and reimbursements are suspended for September and October.

Q: If someone is willing to pay for travel and request reimbursement for October, is that possible?

A: Our office strongly advises against it. Not everyone can be reimbursed. This can be handled on a case-by-case basis. There is already a backlog so it will take some time.

Q: Can travel funding be approved even if seminars must wait to book?

A: Yes. We can approve travel funding but cannot make the arrangements.

Q: Are there funds available for honoraria?

A: No. We do not award honoraria as part of the philosophy of the seminars. We are generous with travel and accommodations. We have The Belo Award in place to help with expenses. It is on the Submittable page on the website.

Q: Who replaced Emerald?

A: Koba.

Q: Are there any funds to compensate chairs who need childcare during the seminar meetings?

A: Yes. See the Belo Award.

Q: Will Faculty House be operating as normal?

A: Faculty House is being as accommodating as possible. One change is that the second floor server room is going to be used again to serve food. We now have three seminar rooms on the second floor. We will try to open the bar when requested. There are no more lunches being served on the fourth floor. Some things are still up in the air.

Q: In the past, the travel agency has arranged tickets for travelers. Will this continue?

A: No. Right before the pandemic began, Columbia switched to a system called Concur. The new Administrative Assistant will make the arrangements through Concur.

Q: Is there still a ten-day RSVP window?

A: Yes. Seminars should give a very close estimate ten days ahead of the meeting. Small changes can be made the day before.

Q: How will hybrid meetings work with a speaker in person and attendees over Zoom?

A: Attendees over Zoom and in the physical room will be brought together in the same virtual room by using 360-degree camera, speaker, and microphone systems called "Meeting Owls" in conjunction with Zoom and smart tvs.

NOTE: Unless a seminar has specifically requested hybrid meetings already, we cannot accommodate hybrid meetings in September or until the new AA is trained.

Q: Are we going to offer parking to members who drive in?

A: The University no longer provides parking for anyone. Parking spaces in the neighborhood tend to free up after 4 pm. We can work with seminars on a case-by-case basis to find local garages or to offer tips.

Q: Does the University Seminars office discourage seminars from meeting over Zoom?

A: No! We encourage seminars to meet over Zoom if that is what works best for the seminar. If seminars meet offsite, the University's COVID policy must still be enforced.

Q: Our seminar (Renaissance) is happy with Zoom as we now have an international membership base and are looking forward to hybrid meetings. Pamela mentioned PowerPoint will be on the side, but how will that work with the speakers and attendees on screens? Where will the presentation be?

A: If the speaker is in person, the PP will be on the physical room's projector screen. Because the projection is connected to the laptop that presentation will also be made available over Zoom as a shared screen. If the speaker is remote, their Zoom tile and their presentation will be prioritized until the presentation is over at which point the member tiles will reappear.

Q: Our seminar (The Middle East) has been planning all hybrid meetings from day one and don't feel like we need much support from the office as we have much of our own equipment.

A: The main concern with not doing hybrid before the AA is trained is that the Owls are expensive. When we left it to the seminars to return equipment, we were constantly replacing items of great cost. The chair will have to take responsibility for any borrowed equipment.

Q: To make a strong recommendation for members to wear masks at meetings for those who might be harried, is it possible for the seminar chair to hand out masks?

A: Yes. The office and Faculty House also have masks available.

Q: If seminars are not allowed to require masks and it is inadvisable to eat indoors, do the free dinners have to be consumed in Faculty House?

A: No. You can strongly recommend but not insist on masking. If the seminar meets at a restaurant, the dinner is still covered by The University Seminars office at the Faculty House rate which is \$30 per person and an additional \$40 for wine.

Q: Our seminar (Science and Subjectivity) meets on Zoom at noon, (EST). Those members who live in New York then get together the evening of a meeting to dine together. Will that continue to be an OK option?

A: Yes. If this is what works for your seminar it is fine.

NOTE: Gessy will send a letter to let chairs to update them on the status of free dinners beyond the first four of the semester.

Pamela shows slides of the TV “picture frames” that show art when they are not in use.

GUIDELINES

We have new Guidelines! Please refer to those for any current information. Summer will update them again in the spring.

IN CLOSING

Thanks go to Pamela for sourcing all the new technology, managing all its installation, and for organizing this Town Hall.