

# **Rethinking the Place of the Humanities and Social Sciences in the Post-COVID-19 Academy**

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, Professor of the Humanities and Social Sciences, and Vice  
Chancellor, United States International University-Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

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## Introduction

As a scholar, I have been a card carrying member of the humanities and social sciences since I went to university in the early 1970s. When I became a high ranking administrator as vice president for academic affairs at an American university and vice chancellor in Kenya overseeing colleges, schools and fields outside my academic specialization and socialization, I have had to place my earlier intellectual affiliations in the broader contexts of the modern university in which the humanities are increasingly pushed to the bottom rungs of the slippery higher education totem pole. Rather than despair about the humanities and social sciences, I have come to appreciate more keenly their indispensability, the powerful synergies between them and other branches of knowledge, the need to facilitate and foster interdisciplinary modes of knowledge production.

In this presentation I will focus on the continued and critical importance of the humanities and social sciences in the post-COVID-19 academy. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the humanities especially were increasingly regarded, in academic, political, and popular discourses, as irrelevant affectations compared to the hard disciplines in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The pandemic seemed to reinforce these prejudices as the world desperately sought biomedical treatments in the race for vaccines, and economic and social life including education transitioned to online platforms and virtual engagements, thereby accelerating the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Yet, both the pandemic and digitalization have underscored the necessity of the knowledges, skills, and literacies of the humanities.

COVID-19 has not been confined to a crisis of physical health. It has also been a mental health crisis, and a complex constellation of economic, social, cultural and political crises. Understanding the multidimensional nature and differentiated impact of the pandemic, devising effective containment strategies, and envisioning better futures requires the insights, imaginations and policies informed by the humanities and social sciences. Similarly, the transformations wrought by the Fourth Industrial Revolution are as much technological as they are social, and the rapidly changing jobs of the digitalized economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century require the cultivation of technical skills as much as lifelong learning skills that the humanities and social sciences are renowned for. Thus, there is need to develop more integrated and interdisciplinary modes of teaching and learning, research and scholarship encompassing the humanities, social sciences, STEM and other domains of the academic enterprise.

My presentation is divided into three parts. First, I examine the common critiques and defenses of the humanities and social sciences with particular emphasis on the former. Second, I will look at the complex and contradictory impact of the pandemic on higher education in general and on the humanities in particular. Finally, I will suggest possible ways of strengthening the humanities and expanding their footprint in the academy and society through interdisciplinarity. As a student of intellectual history—the history of ideas and knowledge producing institutions—I believe we need to avoid freezing and flattening the humanities as homogeneous. Rather we should see them as capacious and changing fields of intellectual inquiry, methods, practices, interests, literacies, and dispositions. It is this very porousness, expansiveness, and malleability that will, I propose, ensure the survival of the humanities in the academy and for society.

## In Defense of the Humanities

In many countries and universities across Africa and around the world, the humanities are deemed to be in crisis as they face a barrage of epistemic and ideological assaults from politicians,

businesspeople, the general public, and in their own institutions from administrators and fellow academics among the more valorized scientific, professional, and pragmatic disciplines. The critiques of the humanities often center on their purported lack of “usefulness” and apparent inability to offer employability skills to their graduates. The attacks fester in a neoliberal world that valorizes economic productivity, competitiveness, and instrumentality.

It is sometimes asserted that reinforcing the apparent decline and disintegration of the humanities in the global postcolonial academy are the intertwined external and internal deconstructive assaults of globalization, decoloniality, feminism, and other insurgent paradigms. It is true every humanities discipline has been forced to reckon with its Eurocentric and androcentric complicities, its cognitive violence and erasures of subjugated cultures, societies, and genders and their knowledges. All too often, the vicious internal civil wars in the humanities, the fierce battles over terms of discourse, serve to accelerate their marginalization among university functionaries preoccupied with financial exigencies and vocational fields that are latecomers to the academy or suffer from serious intellectual deficiency syndromes.

In much of Africa, the dismissal and devaluation of the humanities is exacerbated by the omniscient and omnipresent discourse of developmentalism. The humanities bear the brunt of the purported failures of African higher education to serve as the locomotive of sustainable development. They are accused of enticing and trapping hapless, clueless, or lazy undergraduates in futile and facile soft pursuits, depriving them of the hard skills of the natural sciences and prestigious professions. The marginality of the humanities is evident on university campuses in their often modest if not dilapidated physical accommodations and tend to be reproduced in lower remuneration and institutional regard for humanities faculty compared to those in the more esteemed disciplines and professions.

Beleaguered humanities faculty and scholars are forced to mount all manner of defenses against the ideological and financial pressures they increasingly face from within and outside the academy. The critiques and defenses often rest on a caricature of the humanities, in which the conglomeration of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields in the humanities are stripped of their richness and diversity and collapsed into a distinct formation, a homogeneous singularity of method, approach, purpose, and value.

Clearly, the humanities disciplines are not united by a common object of study or single purpose. Yet, we know the humanities are differentiated in the architecture of the academy from the natural sciences, professions and other branches of knowledge. They share a commitment to secular truth, interpretation, critique and construction. They are narrative disciplines that freely traverse and incorporate artifacts, texts, and data, and address questions about any aspect of the human experience using a diversity of methodologies.

The defenders of the humanities come in many shades and colors. The affronted absolutists claim the humanities hold the canons of eternal truths about humanity. The functionalists contend that the humanities cultivate enlightened and democratic citizenship. The existential argument emphasizes that the humanities foster habits of critique and interpretation essential for maintaining enduring traditions and heritage in a turbulent world.<sup>1</sup> The pragmatists see the humanities as eminently practical, essential to understanding and functioning intelligently and effectively in an increasingly globalized world. To quote one author, “Courses in history, literature, religion, languages, art history, and philosophy provide practical handbooks for how to navigate the world. What questions to ask, what themes to look for, what particular patterns of behavior or thought might reveal.... This is the core of the humanities offensive: Scientific data alone does not inform

and cannot explain all actions and decisions. The humanities provide vital tools for navigating our globalized world.”<sup>2</sup>

Many stress the dispositions the humanities inculcate. They include rigorous, critical and empathetic thinking, the ability to immerse ourselves and invest in appreciating and understanding the otherness and human affinities of different times and places, cultures and societies. At their best, it is often contended, the humanities facilitate historicized reasoning, fidelity to truth and accuracy, foster intellectual curiosity, nurture the moral imagination, and deepen one’s discernment, interpretation and judgement. While not peculiar to the humanities these skills are seen as quintessential in the humanities.

When I was Dean of a liberal arts college in Los Angeles, I was of course paid to defend the liberal arts that in our institutional configuration incorporated the humanities and social science disciplines and numerous interdisciplinary centers and institutes. In one Dean’s Convocation on “Cultivating Academic Excellence: The Power and Promise of the Liberal Arts,”<sup>3</sup> I mounted a vigorous defense of the liberal arts that pleased my colleagues in the college and affirmed others in the university about our centrality. I pointed out that the liberal arts are priceless repositories of intrinsic, intellectual, instrumental, and idealistic values, skills, and competencies.

The intrinsic values of a liberal arts education lie in the sheer joy of learning for its own sake, asking the big questions, making discoveries, cultivating a lifelong quest for learning, and developing passionate individuals and passionate learners. The liberal arts explore and engage the profound issues facing humanity, our enduring individual and collective searches for meaning and belonging, the moral, metaphysical and material dimensions of our existence. They enable us to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our natural and social worlds; nurture the pleasures and leisures of contemplation and imagination; evoke and deepen curiosity and wonder; give us a humane and passionate grammar of life and living in an often inhumane and superficial world.

The intellectual value of the liberal arts is embodied in their capaciousness and versatility, the content richness, the treasures of knowledge in the various liberal arts disciplines and ever mutating interdisciplinary formations. Students are exposed to different fields, foci, and methodologies in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, to vast repertoires of human thought, creativity, and invention that are both enlightening and liberating. They develop active and engaged intellects that can be broadened and nourished by the illuminating insights and transgressive interrogations of interdisciplinarity.

The liberal arts also have instrumental value. They cultivate invaluable skills and competencies for the world of work including critical thinking, oral and communication skills, problem solving, and creative sensibilities. They foster breadth and adaptability to contexts, as well sensitivity to human difference and commonality. When done well, the liberal arts provide interdisciplinary literacy—the ability to see phenomena and solve problems from multiple disciplinary or analytical angles; intercultural literacy—the ability to understand and navigate different cultural and social realities and relationships; international literacy—the capacity to understand the complex interconnectedness of the world’s nations, economies, societies, ecologies, and challenges; and information literacy—the ability to locate, evaluate and use information, which continues to explode exponentially, effectively. This is particularly critical in our age of fake news and massive disinformation perpetrated by politicians, bloggers, and ordinary people that is spread with the ease of a click on social media platforms and by internet bots.

Finally, the liberal arts have idealistic value in their vital contribution to the development of character and citizenship. They can deepen and expand students’ sensibilities and emotional richness, ethical reasoning, and capacity for empathy. The moral power of empathy lies in the

ability to recognize and respect, and have concern and compassion for others as fellow human beings and citizens, regardless of the differences of ethnicity, nationality, race, class, gender, religion, sexuality and other social markers. The liberal arts often cultivate students' moral and narrative imaginations and civic engagement so critical for informed and responsible citizenship and leadership, for building sustainable democratic societies.

Through the liberal arts, we can develop the capacity to commit to something greater than ourselves as individuals or the narrow affiliations of ethnicity or nationality as we grasp the complexities and connectedness of the human condition. This is simultaneously humbling and affirming, out of which both gratitude and wisdom can grow. Students can learn the languages of ethical responsibility and human possibility. There is no doubt that the world needs technically skilled professionals and workers, but there may be an even "greater need for liberally educated citizens and human beings who can distinguish between good from evil, justice from injustice, what is noble and beautiful from what is base and degrading."<sup>4</sup> Technological progress without ethical values produces the grotesque barbarisms that littered the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and bedevil the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most technologically advanced centuries in history.

### The Disruptions of the Pandemic and the Humanities

As I noted in a recent presentation on, "Higher Education in a Post-COVID-19 World: Challenges and Opportunities for African Universities,"<sup>5</sup> the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020 forced universities around the world to confront unprecedented challenges that simultaneously exposed and exacerbated existing deficiencies, dysfunctions, and inequalities among and within countries, institutions, and university stakeholders. Six stand out. First, in terms of transitioning from face to face to remote teaching and learning using online platforms. Second, managing severely strained finances. Third, ensuring the physical and mental health of students, faculty and staff. Fourth, reopening campuses as safely and as effectively as possible. Fifth, planning for a sustainable post-pandemic future. Sixth, contributing to the capacities of government and society in resolving the multiple dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Universities in Africa were among the most affected and least able to manage the multi-pronged crises because of their pre-existing capacity challenges that centered on persistent structural deficiencies in terms of inadequate financial resources and human capital, poor research output and physical and technological infrastructures, and weak leadership and governance, among others. The pandemic not only put pressure on African universities finances and operations, but also raised the stakes for research and policy interventions.

African universities were expected to undertake biomedical and socioeconomic research to manage the pandemic. As I noted in an article in *University World News* summarizing a series of webinars by the Alliance for African Partnership that I moderated between April and July 2020, in which Makerere's University's Vice Chancellor, Prof Barnabas Nawagwe participated, some universities produced hygiene products and personal protective equipment including hand sanitizers, masks, ventilators, EpiTents for patient isolation and mobile hospitals, testing kits, and robots for delivery of food and medicines to patients.<sup>6</sup>

Others undertook research on the epidemiology of the coronavirus and biomedical treatments and the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, provided advisory services to government, developed software to monitor the pandemic's spread, and sought to raise awareness and provide psychosocial support to their constituents and the wider society. However, most African universities and firms stood on the sidelines as their societies waited for the development

of vaccines in the global North, China, and India. At best, a few collaborated with overseas universities, research establishments and networks, and hosted clinical trials. Weak research and drug manufacturing capabilities have made African countries vulnerable to vaccine nationalism in the global North, while democratic deficits have led to the securitization of mitigation measures gravely undermining human rights in several countries.

The pandemic reinforced the depreciation of the humanities and social sciences as focus was placed primarily on the potential contributions of biomedical research and treatments. Yet, the pandemic underscored the intricate, complex, and contested connections between science, society and policy, and between disease, health outcomes, and human attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. As the 2021 *UNESCO World Science Report* notes, “Too often in the past, perspectives from the social sciences and humanities have been overlooked, despite the reality that human behavior and sociological dimensions are key to successful decision-making, as demonstrated by the debates on both the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change.”<sup>7</sup>

The UNESCO report makes a powerful case about the importance of the humanities and social sciences in navigating and overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. “Increasingly, social sciences and the humanities are central to both evidentiary synthesis and brokerage.” It stresses the need to see the scientific or scholarly knowledge enterprise as an ecosystem. As such it has to be based on “a plurality of scientific input, including from the humanities and social sciences but it also illustrates the reality that decision-making ultimately depends on a range of values-based judgments by politicians.”<sup>8</sup> One could add attitudes to the infection and vaccination go beyond the efficacy of biomedical research and reflect complex, contradictory and changing individual and social attitudes. As Ms. Lorna Magara, the Makerere’s Council Chair, noted in her remarks opening this conference earlier, the sciences and humanities have a symbiotic relationship.

The pandemic has accelerated the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is marked by the emergence of quantum computing, artificial intelligence, the internet of things, machine learning, data analytics, big data, robotics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and the convergence of the digital, biological, and physical domains of life, and the digitalization of communication, connectivity, and surveillance. Various consultancy firms and others have produced numerous reports about the implications of these developments on the nature and future of jobs. It is well understood that the current generation of young people is likely to have not only multiple jobs but multiple careers, and that many will spend their working lives over the next several decades in jobs that are yet to be invented.

The reports by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Ernest & Young, and McKinsey, just to mention a few, clearly show that in addition to technical competencies and content knowledges, soft skills and lifelong learning skills will become even more crucial. That future is already here. In its *Future of Jobs Report*, the WEF estimates “that by 2025, 85 million jobs may be displaced by a shift in the division of labor between humans and machines, while 97 million new roles may emerge that are more adapted to the new division of labor between humans, machines and algorithms, across the 15 industries and 26 economies covered by the report”.<sup>9</sup>

The essential employability skills of the present and future communication skills (writing, reading, speaking, presenting, listening and visual literacy), critical thinking and problem solving (analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, creativity and innovative thinking, and decision making), numeracy (quantitative reasoning and conceptualizing), information management (gathering and managing information, computer literacy and internet skills), interpersonal skills (team work, relationship management, conflict resolution, leadership, and networking), and personal skills (for self-management, self-reflection, personal responsibility, adaptability, flexibility, and resilience).

These are all the quintessential values and skills of the liberal arts, of the humanities and social sciences. When I talk to employers, I often hear them say they can teach their employees occupational skills, not the ability to write clearly, concisely and persuasively, to speak articulately and logically, review evidence and find solutions, make rational arguments and ask probing questions, and understand contexts and anticipate outcomes. They appreciate employees with broader cultural horizons, who embrace diversity and can thrive in multicultural environments, who are exposed to the world, receptive to new ideas, have a willingness to learn, capacity to synthesize vast amount of information and knowledge, and can make informed decisions. Clearly, the humanities are critical for the jobs and careers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for meaningful lives and fulfilling livelihoods of the current and future generation of students in our universities.

### Revitalizing the Humanities Through Interdisciplinarity

In order for the liberal arts or humanities and social science disciplines to realize their full potential and effectively fend against the barbarians at the gates, they need to do a much better job of organizing, defending, and marketing themselves. They must address the concerns and interests of contemporary students and society. All too often, humanities faculty and disciplines especially are trapped in antiquarian disciplinary specializations and try to fiercely defend the antiquated Eurocentric disciplinary architecture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The history of ideas shows that massive transformations have taken place since then in the systems of knowledge production, dissemination, and organization determined by the demands and diversities of historical geography and the configurations of prevailing institutional, intellectual, and ideological dynamics. In Chapter 3 of my book, *The Transformation of Global Higher Education, 1945-2015*, I discuss the shifts that have occurred in the four “cultures” of the academy—the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and professions.<sup>10</sup>

Each has been characterized by three key dynamics. First, the reconfiguration of old disciplines and emergence of new ones, development of complex interactions among the disciplines, and struggles for academic capital. Second, the development of new theoretical, analytical, methodological, and educational trends, whose trajectories have varied among and within countries and institutions. Third, the growth of the interdisciplinary imperative, which predictably has its advocates, antagonists and ambivalents, and is driven by various social and cognitive motivations. I examine this subject in greater detail in the introductory chapter to my book, *The Study of Africa. Vol 1: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters*.<sup>11</sup>

To its proponents, interdisciplinarity offers a creative space between disciplines where new questions are asked, new approaches developed, new understandings advanced, and new fields and disciplines emerge. It connects disciplinary insights to address questions that transcend disciplinary boundaries and enhances the problem-solving capacities of scholarship. They stress that the disciplines and interdisciplines are complimentary and illuminate each other and promote among students higher order thinking and more intellectual maturity. Moreover, more careers and employers require specialized backgrounds that are interdisciplinary, and there is nothing inherently wrong with addressing the relevant issues of the day. Indeed, that is profound requirement of our vocation as academics and intellectuals.

Critiques of interdisciplinarity see it as a threat to disciplinary boundaries, hierarchies, and rigor. They contend its objectives and modalities are poorly defined and conceptualized in so far as borrowing among disciplines is normal. Further, its pedagogical benefits are doubtful for students lacking strong disciplinary foundations; it offers them fragmentary exposure to bits and

pieces of various disciplines and impedes their development of disciplinary competence. They claim interdisciplinary studies programs are typically shallow in substituting intellectual rigor for topical excitement and the costs of these programs are too high.

Scholars cross disciplinary lines in response to the rise and fall of specialties and the perceived opportunities, both real and symbolic, of academic migration. There are also the impulses of what some call “disciplinary envy,” the wish by disciplines or scholars within disciplines to model themselves on, borrow from, or appropriate the terms and vocabulary of more esteemed disciplines and their authorities in the perennial struggles for resources and reputational capital in the academy. No less important is the explosion of knowledge and the growing conviction by many scholars, and sometimes by administrators interested in closing small departments, that the 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectual division of knowledge is increasingly becoming obsolete; that each discipline is incapable, by itself, of explaining the complex and interconnected social, ecological, and physical phenomena and processes that characterize our increasingly and unevenly globalized world.

In my view the drift towards interdisciplinarity reflects the complexity, chaos, messiness, and indivisibility of real life better than the compartmentalized disciplines do. While advances in knowledge occur in the traditional disciplines, they are even more likely in the intersections, the liminal spaces between the disciplines, in the interdisciplinary fields that often emerge out of disciplinary interpenetration and struggles to overcome gaps and silences in the disciplines. Disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity also tend to display different predispositions: disciplinarians are more prone to academic ethnocentricity, while interdisciplinarians are more inclined to openness. In reality, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity have existed in dialectical tension and the dynamics of their interaction have continuously changed since the emergence of the modern research university in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In fact, the disciplines emerged out of “metadisciplines.” Most of the disciplines and interdisciplines are new. They acquired their distinctive institutional and intellectual identities in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a process that was driven as much by administrative as by academic imperatives to divide knowledge production and pedagogy into manageable units, each with its own epistemic cultures and communities, foundational projects and commitments, and mechanisms of authorizing new knowledge. Interdisciplines came to be distinguished by their lack of departmentalization, to refer to intellectual activities between disciplines, to various forms of disciplinary transgressions, intersections, borrowings, and collaborations.

Predictably, various metaphors have been used to capture the divide between disciplinary and interdisciplinary formations. Geographical metaphors about “boundaries” are particularly popular. Disciplines are seen as “territories,” “fields” or “turf” that aspiring interdisciplinarians seek to “cross,” “explore,” or even “annex” and “colonize.” In the language metaphor interdisciplinarity entails learning the language of another discipline; it is akin to multilingualism and multiculturalism and requires acknowledgement of differences of values, epistemologies, ideologies, habits, teaching styles, meanings of scholarship, methods of argumentation, and notions of “truth”; in short, it is an act of translation and transculturation.

According to the metaphor of marriage, interdisciplinarity is akin to a process of courtship between two distinct and often diverse disciplines that suddenly discover spheres of mutual interest and complementary resources. In this sense, interdisciplinarity emerges out of cooperative exchanges between disciplines that require alterations in the very questions and issues framing the inter-disciplinary inquiry and interaction, which result in the production of new fields between and across disciplines. The metaphorical diversity underscores difficulties of conceptualizing and



capturing the differences between the two in terms of their organization, objectives, and outcomes. Whatever metaphor is used, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity are mutually constitutive: the latter entails, indeed requires, the existence of the former.

Equally varied are the types of interdisciplinary activities. Like disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity entails a series of different activities, has varied programmatic, paradigmatic and pedagogical dimensions, and means different things as an attribute of the work, the scholar, and the audience. Five typologies can be distinguished. First, there is what can be termed *exploratory* interdisciplinarity that involves borrowing ideas and methods from other disciplines (multidisciplinarity). Second, *team-based* interdisciplinarity in which scholars from different disciplines collaborate to solve a problem or understand a phenomenon (crossdisciplinarity).

Third, *paradigmatic* interdisciplinarity that arises out of synthetic theories that operate across disciplines, such as Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, critical theory, constructivism, environmentalism (transdisciplinarity). Fourth, *cross-over* interdisciplinarity in which new fields are constituted from overlapping areas of separate disciplines, such as anthropology, social psychology and psycholinguistics, and several new fields in STEM, such as in the biological sciences and information technology from biotechnology, nanotechnology, to data analytics. Finally, *free-range* interdisciplinarity that refers to people with eclectic interests whose disciplinary homes are hard to fathom. In practice and for many people, these categories overlap.

Many humanities scholars derive hope in the emergence of the so-called new humanities. They include “the digital humanities, environmental humanities, energy humanities, global humanities, urban humanities, food humanities, medical humanities, legal humanities, and public humanities. These new alloys,” to quote Jeffrey Williams, “emphasize commerce between other disciplines, particularly STEM or professional fields, and humanistic ways of thinking. And they’re not just adding new intellectual perspectives; a substantial institutional infrastructure has materialized to support them, yielding new programs, journals, book series, conferences, courses, degrees, and (most importantly) jobs. All of this indicates that these new hybrids are not the products of some momentary fad: They’re here to stay.”<sup>12</sup>

Time does not allow for much elaboration. To quote the same author again, “The digital humanities (DH) has cast a sizable footprint in qualitative disciplines like literary studies and history, importing methods from computing, statistics, information science, and demography,” while the environmental humanities draw “especially on the life sciences, but also on disciplines like geology, economics, and engineering, it looks at the human aspects of environmental issues — particularly climate change.” For their part, “the energy, food, global, and urban humanities draw on humanistic ways to address major social topics. The energy humanities concentrates on specific resources and emphasizes the way that capitalism and energy shape our culture. The global humanities underscores the patterns of migration of people and the networks around the world through which goods are manufactured and distributed and labor dispersed, and the urban humanities focuses on metropolises... And the food humanities similarly attends to webs of production and distribution, although it might focus more on the cultures attached to food.”

The development of the medical humanities and legal humanities underscores the fact that both medicine and law are not just technical pursuits, but are grounded, can benefit from, and their impacts can be more fully understood in humanistic frames of analysis. Another potentially exciting trend is the emergence of what is called the public humanities, the drive among humanities scholars to go public, to speak to public audiences about the pressing issues of the day.<sup>13</sup> Data science is also increasingly casting its spell on the humanities both as an object of study and a method that builds on longstanding traditions of integrating data in the humanities.<sup>14</sup>

The growing trend and pressures for interdisciplinary approaches in the humanities require curricula reform and innovation. Eric Hayot suggests “such modules could come in two types. Skill modules would focus on practices: language learning, writing and speaking, historical, cultural, and social analysis. Theme modules would focus on topics: social justice, migration studies, the problem of God, translation, journalism, wealth and inequality, conflict, ideas of beauty, television, society and technology, and the like.”<sup>15</sup> Employing interdisciplinarity to revitalize the humanities also has implications for faculty recruitment, retooling and retention that could include thematic faculty hiring, training and incentives.

As a proud and reflexive lifelong humanists and social scientist I believe the humanities and social sciences are alive and well, and have a bright future. To ensure that requires us to pursue rigorous, innovative and transformative teaching and learning, and produce scholarship of the highest quality and social impact. **THANK YOU!**

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Flannery, “Liberal Arts and Liberal Education,”

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *The Study of Africa. Vol 1: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters*. Dakar: Codesria Book Series.

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