



CORNERSTONE

Learning for Living

Finding Common Ground: How Colleges Can Meet The Moment

November 12-13, 2026

The New York Historical

170 Central Park West at Richard Gilder Way (77th Street)

New York, NY 10024

Registration Required

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

5:30-7:00 pm

America's Teacher: Abraham Lincoln
Robert H. Smith Auditorium

Join a lively conversation featuring [George Saunders](#), author of the Booker Prize winning novel *Lincoln in the Bardo*, and [Roosevelt Montás](#), founding director of the newly launched [Chang Chavkin Center for Liberal Education and Civic Life](#) at Bard College, on teaching Lincoln to today's undergraduates—a discussion that marks America250 and the enduring promise of liberal education. The conversation will be moderated by [Andrew Delbanco](#), president of the Teagle Foundation, and will be interwoven with performances, conducted by [Leon Botstein](#), by students from the Bard College Conservatory of Music.

7:00-8:00 pm

Reception
Robert H. and Clarice Smith New York Gallery of American History

Gather with colleagues for refreshments and a toast to America's 250th and to the mission of the Chang Chavkin Center. Complimentary copies of George Saunders's *Lincoln in the Bardo* and Roosevelt Montás's *Rescuing Socrates* will be distributed at the event, and the authors will be available to sign books during the reception.



Bard

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13 [BY INVITATION ONLY]

- 8:00-9:00 am Registration and Breakfast
Patricia D. Klingenstein Library, 2nd Floor
- 9:00-9:05 am Welcome
Brian Rosenberg, Chair, The Teagle Foundation
- 9:05-9:30 am Making the Case for Core Curriculum for Today's Students
Roosevelt Montás, Laura Y. Chang and Arnold Chavkin Professor in Liberal Education and Civic Life, Bard College
- 9:30-10:30 am Grantee Voices: Teaching in a Time of Polarization
Moderated by [Ian Wilhelm](#), Deputy Managing Editor, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
- [Taryn Okuma](#) on [Catholic University of America's](#) Cornerstone Program
[Amanda Tucker](#) on [University of Wisconsin Platteville's](#) Helios Program
[Mark Urista](#) on [Linn-Benton Community College's](#) Cornerstone Program
[Melinda Zook](#) on [Purdue University's](#) Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts
- 10:30-10:45 am Coffee Break
- 10:45 am-12:00 pm What Happens in the Classroom is the Main Event
[Carlo Rotella](#), Professor of English, Boston College
- Students and their families often question the “return on investment” for studying the humanities, and the issue has become especially acute with the rise of AI. Carlo Rotella, author of [What Can I Get Out of This: Teaching and Learning in a Classroom Full of Skeptics](#), will lead a workshop on how in-class discussions can help students wrestle with challenging texts, share ideas, and form a community.
- 12:00-1:00 pm Lunchtime Keynote
[Mary Dana Hinton](#), President, Hollins University
- 1:00-2:00 pm Small Group Discussion Activity
Using the guide available at your table, share strategies with your colleagues on what has been helpful—or not—to implement, grow, and sustain your efforts. Attendees are welcome to have “walk-and-talk” meetings across the street in Central Park, weather permitting.
- 2:00-3:30 pm “How I Teach These Texts” Breakout Sessions
- Roosevelt Montás on Abraham Lincoln’s [“Speech on the Dred Scott Decision”](#) and Frederick Douglass’s [“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”](#)
Patricia D. Klingenstein Library, 2nd Floor
- [Jason Miller](#) on [Langston Hughes' Poetry](#) and [Nina Simone's Protest Music](#)

Academy Classroom, 2nd floor

Emily Stacey on [Federal Farmer No. 4](#) and [Federalist No. 84](#)
Tech Commons, 4th floor

3:30-3:45 pm

Coffee Break

3:45-4:45 pm

Student and Teacher Voices: Reflecting on Core Texts and Core Courses

Undergraduate students—and their teachers—from two- and four-year institutions across the country reflect on the impact of engaging with primary works in gateway courses that cultivate a common intellectual experience.

4:45-5:00 pm

Closing Remarks by Andrew Delbanco, President, The Teagle Foundation

OPTIONAL WORKSHOPS

Option 1:

Reading Frederick Douglass: Humanities for All
Thursday, November 12 from 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Venue: New York Historical

Dig deeply into two speeches delivered by Frederick Douglass, “[Our Composite Nation](#)” and “[Lessons of the Hour](#).” The workshop, led by New York Historical (NYH) staff, will explore the intersection between NYH museum artifacts and Douglass’s writings, and expand outward to consider how the humanities play a vital role in engaging first-year college students with important questions and valuable skills.

Option 2:

The Living Declaration
Saturday, November 14 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Venue: New York Historical

Organized by the [Chang Chavkin Center for Liberal Education and Civic Life](#) in partnership with [Library of America](#) and the [Jack Miller Center](#), the day centers on [The Living Declaration: A Biography of America's Founding Text](#), a new volume edited by historian and former presidential speechwriter Ted Widmer. Weaving together sixty-eight essential primary texts, the book traces how America's founding charter came to be and how it has shaped democratic aspirations across the globe for more than two centuries. Widmer will be in conversation with faculty and participants throughout the day, which will include a plenary session, small group breakout discussions, and a tour of artifacts related to the founding documents led by NYH staff. The day is designed to deepen faculty knowledge of the history and legacy of the Declaration of Independence and to provide practical tools and approaches for teaching this history in a liberal education seminar. Lunch and refreshments will be provided and each participant will receive a complimentary copy of *The Living Declaration*. Separate [registration required](#).