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SLOW LMU: Taking Time for Each Other, Making Time for Ourselves

Bellarmino Forum 2016: The Values of Time

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SLOW LMU

**Taking Time for Each Other,
Making Time for Ourselves**

Coordinated by Bellarmine Forum 2016: The Values of Time
Paul Harris (English) & Brad Stone (Philosophy), Directors

SLOW LMU: An Invitation-Invocation

As Directors of the 2016 Bellarmine Forum "The Values of Time," we write to invite you to join **SLOW LMU**. This project is integral to our vision and aspirations for the Bellarmine Forum, which, in its new format, unfolds over the course of the fall semester.

We, the LMU academic community, are ripe for a reboot. We have committed a great deal of our most precious non-renewable resource—TIME—to extensive, meaningful institutional change: revised R&T procedures, a new Core Curriculum, University and College strategic plans, department bylaws, a shift to 4-unit courses, and implementing shared governance. We have all talked a lot of talk and walked a lot of walk. **NOW**, now, we deserve a pause. This is the moment to take a deep breath. This is the time to refresh our spirits and reconnect with one another. This is the time for slow time.

As you will see, **SLOW LMU** does not denote inertia or inaction. It is all about talking and walking, but slowly. Our motto for Bellarmine Forum 2016 is "Contemplate-Create-Collaborate." We extend an open invitation to play and experiment, invent and discover. Let's get really, really *slow*. Together.

Paul Harris (English) & Brad Stone (Philosophy)

SLOW LMU: Professional Context

The culture of speed has deeply impacted university life. Pressured by rising costs, students and faculty are driven to be more productive in a stressed landscape shaped by increased competition, budget cuts, technology, and the instantaneity of social media.

Universities are under pressure to do more with less. Academics have to work longer hours and students feel compelled to rush through their degree with jam-packed schedules. The 'Impact' paradigm for measuring the value of scholarship incites scholars to write and be read more, which means doing both more quickly. The logics of accounting and economics of productivity are colonizing the mind's work, shaping our intellectual habits.

Most critically, these factors are preventing the university from making optimum use of the incredible collective learning opportunities at our disposal. There is an immense, growing gap between what we could do collectively and what we actually fail to do, because academic thinking gets weeded out of public debates. As information access continues to increase exponentially, our lack of adequate time and attention in processing it, sifting it for ideas, makes this gap between our collective potential and collective effectiveness widen. The result is what Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, has famously referred to a “globalization of superficiality.”

The university needs to reassert its identity as the place where we discipline the mind and spirit through extended contemplative, cognitive, creative practices. The university must continue to be where collective wisdom works in a parallel, distributed fashion in an ecology of learning that allows ideas to percolate, undergo critical scrutiny, and emerge as complex multiplicities rather than unitary concepts.

SLOW LMU seeks to mitigate these forces, and to recuperate the deliberative mode of thinking, living, and working specific to academia. This is not the first call for slow practice at LMU: Brian Treanor (Philosophy) posted a [Slow University Manifesto](#) more than a decade ago! The Slow movement is taking root in academic life more widely; Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber's *The Slow Professor* (2016) provides an excellent overview of professional and personal perspectives and possibilities. (This document was drafted before the book was available—hence it is not cited or incorporated in SLOW LMU.)

SLOW LMU: Mission & Collegiality

SLOW LMU will foster intentional engagement with LMU's mission and the Ignatian tradition. **SLOW LMU** will facilitate opportunities for students and faculty, staff and administrators, to gather together or retreat alone in slow time contexts emphasizing collective action and contemplative reflection. Slow time builds community dedicated to mindful learning and attends to *cura personalis* in its deepest sense.

SLOW LMU will be a virtual university within the campus that will emerge and evolve by being enacted. It will be created collectively through collaborations and actions taken among participants. It will comprise an ongoing performance in which actors share agency equally. **SLOW LMU** encourages an ethos of play: explore, improvise, experiment; try new things in class, invent activities or practices for teaching/research....

SLOW LMU has its own mission-ambition: to recuperate and realize the ideal university we have always believed in or wished for, the university we signed up for when we chose academic life as a vocation. This imaginary university may assume different forms for different folks—a space to pursue intellectual passions, a place that fosters and supports deep creative thinking or slow mulling of problems, an ecology of ideas thriving in an environment where colleagues meet to share ideas and projects in a stress-free, supportive manner.... We invite you to bring your particular priorities to the table in producing the **SLOW LMU** of your aspirations.

The Bellarmine Forum theme "The Values of Time" provides a way to frame and think through these questions. **SLOW LMU** enjoins reflection on core issues: What are the values you hold most deeply in academic life? How do those values correlate with how you spend your time? What specific temporalities are associated with your core values? How can these values and temporalities be realized in the time and space of the university?

We realize that there is an inherent paradox in **SLOW LMU**: it is difficult to 'take time' or 'make time' when time is precisely what we feel we lack. But we believe that the time we 'spend' or 'invest' in slow academic life changes the nature of the 'time' we are talking about: a shift from a static, quantitative, economy of time (time is being, time is money, a commodity we spend/invest) to a dynamic, qualitative, ecology of time (time is becoming, time is the gift of life, the shared fabric of existence).

We hope that the time you dedicate to discernment around questions of time and values during fall 2016 will be fruitful, fulfilling, and energizing. We hope **SLOW LMU** experiments and play will take root in practices and priorities that sustain one in living a rich academic life, and co-creating a hospitable, caring community.

SLOW LMU: Enrollment

SLOW LMU helps students, faculty, staff, and administrators to consciously carve out slow time in the fast lives lead in university life today. By joining, you commit to finding ways to experience slow time, slow work, or slow scholarship this fall.

What you receive:

- A Slow Time Zone poster designating your office/work space as a SLOW LMU site.
- A copy of the 2016 LMU Common Book, *A Tale for the Time Being*, by Ruth Ozeki.
- Membership in the SLOW LMU Brightspace community, where you can post a profile and participate in discussion threads and propose SLOW LMU actions/activities.
- Myriad ways to affirm slowness as an ethical, spiritual, or practical value in your academic life.
- Some lucky participants will receive a copy of *How To Walk* by Thich Nhat Hanh.
- Some lucky participants will receive a Bellarmine Forum 2016 t-shirt.

What you commit to:

- A practice of "Slow Time Exercises" (modeled on the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises)
- Read *A Tale for the Time Being* by and participate in Common Book programming at your leisure (e.g., join a book group discussion of the novel, visit the art installation in the library inspired by it, attend Ruth Ozeki's presentation November 2).
- Attend at least two Forum events during the fall semester. A complete schedule will be kept on the [Bellarmine Forum website](#).

Sign me up!:

To join SLOW LMU, visit lmu.edu/bellarminforum and choose "JOIN SLOW LMU." Fill out the sign-up form to make your commitment to slowing down. You'll receive your Slow Time loot and be added to the SLOW LMU discussion board. Or contact the Bellarmine Forum directors, Paul Harris (Paul.Harris@lmu.edu) or Brad Stone (Brad.Stone@lmu.edu).

SLOW LMU Campus: Slow Time Zones

An integral component of **SLOW LMU** is creating Slow Time Zones on campus. These sites are designed to facilitate contemplation and play and prompt participants to connect human lives to the deep time of earth history. The Bellarmine Forum offers four Slow Time Zones (described below), and encourages SLOW LMU participants to create other spaces dedicated to slow time.

"So Short A Lease": Early Reflections on the Human Timeline: Curated by Mayra Cortez (graduate student, English), this exhibition (in the Department of Archives and Special Collections, Hannon Library) illuminates how people in early modern Europe viewed time in relation to life, death, and faith. The exhibition also acknowledges the contributions of J.T. Fraser (Founder, International Society for the Study of Time) to the advancement of scholarly dialogue related to all aspects of time by presenting materials from the *J. T. Fraser Personal Papers and Collection of International Society for the Study of Time Records*.

The Displacement Garden: Designed by Bellarmine Forum Artist-in Residence Richard Turner and Paul Harris, this installation transforms a closed surplus space on campus known as The Elephant Cage (outside Laband Art Gallery) into an open meditative sanctuary. The Displacement Garden, defined by a dynamic tension between volumes and voids similar to *sarensui* (dry landscape) Zen rock gardens, invites visitors to sit and gaze in peace or practice contemplative stone stacking. On a different level, site elements of displaced components confined in holding cages, and play with found objects amid rubble, evoke the refugee crisis. The garden's material displacement is mirrored by a conceptual one between meditative refuge and refugee camp, a flight from quotidian time and a flight from forces of history.

Being and Slow Time: Curated by Bellarmine Forum Artist-in Residence Richard Turner and Paul Harris, this exhibition (in Hannon Library) responds to the 2016 Common Book, *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki. The novel's title alludes to Zen master Dōgen's teaching that "*time itself is being, and all being is time*," and that the universe is composed of time beings with different temporalities, from humans to trees to stones to mountains to earth. Playing off of Martin Heidegger's monumental *Being and Time*, the exhibition signals a shift from Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of time to an ecological vision of slow time.

Cretan Labyrinth: A labyrinth for mindful walking situated on the bluff, near the Tongva Memorial. Walkers will be cooled by ocean breezes and accompanied by hawks riding the updraft from the bluff. The Cretan Labyrinth, found at sites around the world dating from the Neolithic Period, carries symbolic associations with a womb or brain of the earth. Drawing or walking its sinuous, circuitous path calibrates body and mind to a space and time that creates calm, balance, and clarity.

SLOW LMU & Ignatian Spirituality: Slow Time Exercises

Slow Time is a concept that draws on the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises as a disciplined contemplative practice and links to contemplative pedagogies, institutional practices, and scholarly research in areas including environmental ethics, ecology, globalization, geophilosophy, and critical theory. The values of slow time include disciplining the mind for contemplative reflection, deepening interior affect and imagination, opening one's heart to others and other cultures, aligning immediate short-term decisions and practices with long-term planetary thinking and sustainability, and connecting local decisions to global ethics and justice.

In the spirit of The Spiritual Exercises for Busy Persons offered through Center for Ignatian Spirituality, the Bellarmine Forum engages SLOW LMU participants in Slow Time Exercises. The Spiritual Exercises provide a structured sequence for daily contemplative practice and weekly meetings with a guide. The Slow Time Exercises invite participants to explore a menu of offered exercises/experiences and create their own. Rather than meeting with a guide, participants are encouraged to meet with SLOW LMU colleagues and share their experiences.

We suggest doing Slow Time Exercises 3 times a week for at least 30 minutes. Create a Slow Time Exercises Journal and write in it 5 – 10 minutes after each exercise session. Consider setting up a weekly or bi-weekly meeting with a SLOW LMU colleague to discuss your experiences.

On the menu of Slow Time Exercises:

Visit Bellarmine Forum Slow Time Zones

- Stack stones in The Displacement Garden (at Laband Art Gallery)
- Walk meditatively at the Cretan Labyrinth (bluff, near Tongva Memorial)
- Explore deep time at "Being and Slow Time" Exhibition (Library)

Slow Walking

Slow, concentrated walking, attentive to breathing, grounds one in the present, connects one to the earth, and can alleviate stress, facilitate wonder, and increase gratitude.

Interested participants may request a copy of *How To Walk* by Thich Nhat Hanh (email paul.harris@lmu.edu) (while supplies last!). Itineraries for slow campus walks:

- Ballona Discovery Walk (base of the bluff)
- Arc of Time (next to Life Sciences building).
- Dérive: random walk, purposely avoid usual routes and let yourself be drawn by the attractions of the terrain. Photograph weird things and post on social media using #SlowLMU.
- Slow Bridge: step the bridge from UHall very slowly, alone or in a group.
- Art Walk: Take time to visit art on campus, including the Laband Gallery, the windows and other art in Sacred Heart Chapel, The Marymount Institute, and Slow Time Zone exhibitions listed above.

Ignatian Examen

An integral practice of Ignatian spirituality, the Examen entails a concise reflection/discernment to be conducted at the middle and end of the day. Faculty and staff may consult with The Center for Ignatian Spirituality for guidance in developing a personal practice. Interested parties may wish to undertake the Spiritual Exercises for Busy Persons.

Zen Meditation

Facilitated by Paul Humphreys (Music), Monday/Wednesday 7:30 – 8:50am, Marymount Institute (University Hall 3003). Wear suitable clothing suitable for cross-legged or cushion-supported kneeling posture. Instruction for beginners can be arranged by contacting Paul (338-7432, phumphreys@lmu.edu).

Mutual Mentoring/Collegial Conversations

Meet with LMU colleagues for a casual conversation or more structured mentoring session tailored to your individual priorities and needs in teaching, research, and life-work balance.

Doing Nothing

Don't do anything specific. Clock out and let your mind wander. For a fabulous vision of this practice, check out [The International Institute of Not Doing Much](http://TheInternationalInstituteofNotDoingMuch.org) (slowdownnow.org).

SLOW LMU: Slow Scholarship

SLOW LMU will foster an academic community founded on slow scholarship. Faculty will be encouraged to create opportunities for mutually supportive conversation. Faculty may form research groups where they outline a scholarly project with a timeline for completion, and where they are responsible to and for one another. Through the SLOW LMU discussion board, faculty can propose meetings and slow hours in the Faculty Commons in Hannon Library.

The Bellarmine Forum Research Seminar will convene a mix of faculty and graduate students to read, think, and create new scholarship related to questions of time and values. An invitation to participate and call for proposals will be disseminated early in the fall semester.

Slow Scholarship is grounded in a feminist ethics of care foregrounding collective action. See [For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University](#).

Slow Scholarship reclaims a humanistic scholarly tradition and resists the "impact" research paradigm. See [Impact Boom!: The Commodification of the University](#).

SLOW LMU: Slow Pedagogy

Contemplative pedagogy is quickly becoming widespread in academia, and is already widely practiced by LMU faculty in a variety of ways. SLOW LMU will collaborate with the Center for Teaching Excellence in facilitating conversations dedicated to slow pedagogy at LMU.

SLOW LMU: Beyond the Bellarmine Forum

Our ultimate hope is that SLOW LMU will sow seeds that take root and grow a vital academic community. We hope that experiments undertaken by SLOW LMU participants will yield rewarding results, and evolve into sustainable personal and professional practices. We hope that SLOW LMU participants will share their experiences with others and contribute to making LMU a slower and more mindful campus. We share the ambitious belief that SLOW LMU can become a model for other universities, and we would welcome opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in fostering a wider slow academic culture.

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