Dear Colleague,

John Steinbeck is best known as the writer who laid bare the suffering of the worker during the 1930s in *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. He is a regional writer in the best sense, for his passionate attachment to place and to California’s history and diverse peoples informs much of his finest work, from early short stories to the compelling *East of Eden* (1952). For many readers, Steinbeck is quintessentially American, the voice of American values. Throughout his long career as social critic, he was unafraid to question “the tomorrow of my people,” yet optimistic enough to add, “my questioning is compounded of some fear, more hope, and great confidence.” Indeed, Steinbeck’s curiosity extended beyond American shores as well. With sensitivity and perspicuity, he wrote journalistic accounts of World War II, post World War II Russia and, in 1966-67, Vietnam. Equally important, John Steinbeck’s sense of place and history was enriched by his interest in science. His friendship with marine biologist Edward F. Ricketts from 1930-1948 had a deep and lasting impact on his work, evident in the book that was his own favorite, *Sea of Cortez*. But Steinbeck’s ecological sensibilities inform many other of his works, both fiction and nonfiction. This National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute is about those diverse and intersecting visions—about the writer who delineated with great clarity the contours of his region, and who also spoke forcefully and clearly for American values.

Steinbeck is one of the most beloved and most often dismissed of American authors, beloved because he connects with readers, a stance he cultivated. He wanted readers to “participate” in each book, to “understand”; both are words he used again and again. His clear prose and empathetic vision continue to inspire readers at all levels. He creates a relationship—a rapport, even—with a vast body of readers. But he has also been dismissed by some academics and critics who deplore a vision that seems too accessible, or dismiss his sentiment, or belittle what they see as his spongy politics. The seminar will explore why Steinbeck deserves complex consideration through discussions focused on his regional ties as well as his ecological, political, and social visions.

During this three-week institute based off campus on Cannery Row, California, teachers and scholars will reconsider this iconic American writer, author of more than thirty books, winner of the Pulitzer Prize (in 1940, for *The Grapes of Wrath*), the Nobel Prize for Literature (1962) and the United States Medal of Freedom (1964). Days will be filled with study, exploration of the area, discussion and reflection. The first part of the Institute focuses on Steinbeck and the land, while the second examines Steinbeck and the sea, with particular
emphasis on his interest in marine ecology. During the three weeks, participants will have ample opportunity to appreciate “Steinbeck Country”—Salinas, Monterey, Big Sur, the Pacific Coast—through our holistic exploration of Steinbeck’s literature.

Content

The Steinbeck Institute will begin late afternoon on Sunday, July 17, and end at 5:00 on August 5, the final day spent at the Steinbeck Festival in Salinas. Throughout the institute, NEH Summer Scholars will be immersed in the social history and ecological awareness that inform Steinbeck’s California fiction: local agricultural and fishing industries, the California mission legacy, migrant histories that shaped regional diversity, and the interest in marine studies that he and Ricketts shared. Steinbeck scholars as well as local historians and biologists will lead workshops that focus on the regional influences and historical and ecological contexts for several of his major novels. Central to a full appreciation of his work will be on-site visits to Steinbeck locales: Salinas and the Salinas Valley, the Monterey coast, the environs of Pacific Grove, Carmel and Carmel Valley, and lovely and remote Mission San Antonio, the setting for one of his earliest novels, *To a God Unknown*. One weekend trip as well as afternoon excursions will make use of local resources, including the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas, Elkhorn Slough, Hopkins Marine Station for tide pooling (where Steinbeck himself took classes in marine biology in 1923). During an on-site agricultural tour NEH Summer Scholars will learn about crop diversity, water use, and labor and housing issues. NEH Summer Scholars will also spend one day on a research vessel on Monterey Bay. Area experts will be on hand to discuss marine life and local history.

The first week examines Steinbeck as a short story writer and social historian, focusing on short stories in *The Long Valley*, as well as his novels *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. At the beginning of the second week, the group turns to Steinbeck’s epic treatment of the Salinas Valley, *East of Eden*. Midway through that week the focus shifts to Steinbeck and the sea and consideration of *Cannery Row* and *Sea of Cortez*. An important goal is to integrate Steinbeck’s environmental vision with his novels, and we will therefore consider his work in light of representative classic selections from Aldo Leopold, Gary Snyder, and Rachel Carson (Steinbeck told his wife Elaine that *Silent Spring* was the one book he wished he had written). In these discussions we will move beyond a reading of Steinbeck as social historian of the 1930s to consider how his work resonates with contemporary issues and environmental ethics. Throughout this three-week institute, the NEH Summer Scholars will thus consider how Steinbeck’s literature speaks across disciplines—historical, political, and scientific.

Since the weeks at the institute are filled with discussion and activities, NEH Summer Scholars are expected to have read all texts before they arrive.

A variety of approaches to teaching will be modeled during the institute. Utilizing performance pedagogy as a method for interactive interpretation of texts, two sessions will be devoted to integrating performance and performance theory in the classroom. Another session will be given by a professor of creative writing, who will examine the structure of Steinbeck’s short stories and how they reveal the author’s approach to writing fiction. Other workshops will consider the importance of voice and ethnicity—exploring both the varied regional voices that Steinbeck sought to include in his novels (ethnic as well as marginalized workers, southwestern migrants as well as the broad empathy seen in Casy, Doc and Slim) as well as analyzing how these voices continue to speak to larger issues in American society. In the second part of the
institute, we will examine ways in which field studies can enrich the reading of environmental
texts.

The Program Directors and teacher facilitators will also meet in curriculum planning
workshops designed to help NEH Summer Scholars adapt institute materials and approaches for
their classroom needs. Participants will contribute their resulting lessons or other curricular
materials to a national project website housing scholarly resources, an image gallery, and
curriculum materials developed by the institute: See the results of the 2007 and 2009 Steinbeck
Institutes (and additional information on the 2011 program) at http://steinbeckinstitute.org.

Core Faculty

Susan Shillinglaw is a Professor of English at San Jose State University and Scholar-in-
Residence at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas. William Gilly is a Professor of Biology at
Stanford University, and he has been a part of the past two institutes, in 2007 and 2009. The co-
directors a course at Stanford University, Holistic Biology, that is designed to bridge humanities
and science, and they frequently lecture together on Steinbeck, Ricketts, and the Sea of Cortez.

Dr. Susan Shillinglaw will give presentations on Steinbeck as well as conduct site visits
to important regional locales. A noted Steinbeck scholar, she has published several articles on the
author and has edited Steinbeck’s journalism (America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction)
collections of essays. She has also written introductions to Penguin editions of Cannery Row, Of Mice and Men, A Russian Journal, and most recently The Winter of Our Discontent. She is
the author of A Journey Into Steinbeck’s California (2006), a copy of which will be sent to all
participants, and has recently completed a biography of Steinbeck’s first wife, Carol Henning
Steinbeck. Her current project is to co-edit a Steinbeck encyclopedia of cultural contexts, All
Things Steinbeck.

Dr. William Gilly is a Professor of Biology at Stanford University and is based at Hopkins
Marine Station in Pacific Grove. He was Director and Chief Scientist for the 2004 retracing of
Steinbeck and Ricketts’s Sea of Cortez trip. In addition to an accomplished scientific career in
which he has published over 60 peer-reviewed publications, he has engaged in numerous
outreach projects involving print, television, radio and web media. Gilly has taught literature
and interdisciplinary studies in his Holistic Biology course at Stanford since 2005 and is
working with educational programs at all levels through his outreach program, Squids-4-Kids.
He is one of the “Nifty Fifty” scientists who spoke to high school classrooms in the
Washington D.C. area in October, 2010 in conjunction with the first USA Science and
Engineering Festival. His current research focuses on the ecology and physiology of the
Humboldt squid and on impacts of decreasing oxygen in marine systems, including Monterey
Bay. He will lead workshops and field work on intertidal ecology and guide the research-
vessel experience.

In addition to the directors, guest faculty include Dr. Robert DeMott, a Professor of
English at Ohio University, author of Steinbeck’s Typewriter: Essays on His Art and editor of
Working Days: The Journals of The Grapes of Wrath as well as the Steinbeck titles for the
Library of America; Dr. Chris Fink, creative writer and Associate Professor of English at
Beloit College, who has been a contributing editor for Steinbeck Studies; Dr. Matthew
Spangler, an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at San Jose State University and
author and director of over thirty adaptations of literature for the stage; Dr. Scot Guenter,
Professor of Humanities at San Jose State University, who teaches American Studies and will
discuss East of Eden, film and text, in cultural context; and Dr. Persis Karim, who will discuss
working class voices in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Additional diverse authors and teachers in the fields of California history, marine biology, and Steinbeck studies will lead workshops and discussions.

**Expectations of NEH Summer Scholars**

NEH Summer Scholars should expect an intensive but rewarding experience during this three-week institute. Workshops are scheduled Monday through Friday, with one weekend field trip scheduled for July 29th and 30th. Several evenings are set aside for film showings, informal meals, and other gatherings. Institute sessions will include lectures, discussions, small group workshops, writing, field study and participatory performance—each providing a different methodology for understanding and interacting with the institute readings. NEH Summer Scholars will be provided with composition books for documenting their thoughts and questions in the course of workshop sessions as well as during their free time. All NEH Summer Scholars are expected to attend all required events and to have read the key texts before arrival.

During all three weeks, NEH Summer Scholars will be supported in translating ideas, content, and approaches from workshops into an appropriate format to engage students. Dialogic interactions, performance-based approaches, and use of visual images taken during the field trips will be emphasized. Ideas produced in these sessions will be published on the institute website (steinbeckinstitute.org). Use of visual images will be supported through the loan of digital cameras during field trips; teachers will be able to download their pictures into a common database for all of the participants to use. We will provide flash drives and technical support for participants so that they may incorporate photographs directly into electronic presentations for classroom use.

A letter will be sent to all NEH Summer Scholars after acceptance detailing specific readings as well as a calendar of presentation topics.

**Applicants Qualifications**

Applicants to NEH Summer Institutes must be practicing full-time (or the equivalent) teachers or full-time graduate students intending to pursue a career in secondary education (three places are available for graduate students). We welcome applications from a variety of disciplines. While previous experience teaching Steinbeck or American literature is not required, we prefer applicants who intend to incorporate knowledge of Steinbeck into their professional lives in some meaningful way. We encourage teachers who wish to deepen subject knowledge and improve the effectiveness of their teaching pedagogy.

**Academic resources**

NEH Summer Scholars will be able to use the California Room at the Monterey Public Library and the library at Hopkins Marine Station, where Steinbeck texts will be housed. In addition, the Directors will have available key secondary texts.

The Victorian Inn is wired for Internet use in each room; participants are strongly encouraged to bring laptops.

**Housing**

NEH Summer Scholars will be housed at off campus at The Victorian Inn on Foam Street, two blocks up from Cannery Row and Ed Ricketts’ Lab, the meeting spot for Steinbeck and other local artists and writers throughout the 1930s. Room rates are $129.00 + tax per night.
for a shared room with breakfast. Participants should expect to allocate approximately half their stipend for a shared room at this hotel. A few singles are available for $129.00 per night + tax. One weekend—July 29th and 30th—the group will take a field trip, either to Big Sur or to Stanford, and on Friday and Saturday nights will stay at another hotel (you will not be billed for those nights at the Victorian Inn).

The Victorian Inn affords NEH Summer Scholars the unparalleled opportunity to be within walking distance of numerous Steinbeck sites and points of interest on a daily basis. Its location and accommodations are superb. The hotel offers hot breakfast, free internet in rooms, as well as easy access to the Monterey Bay Coastal Recreation Trail for walking, jogging or bicycling.

**Stipends**

NEH Summer Scholars participating in a three-week institute are awarded a $2700 stipend, which is meant to help cover travel, housing, and food costs during the institute. Half of the stipend will be given to participants when they arrive (a portion of those funds must be used to cover the hotel on arrival) and the remaining amount will be provided near the end of the project. In order to be eligible for the full amount of the stipend, NEH Summer Scholars must attend all required events and activities.

**Continuing Education Credit (CEUs) for NEH Summer Scholars**

Optional continuing education units (CEUs are not equivalent to college course credit, however) can be earned for 1-6 units at the nominal fee of $25 per unit. These units have been arranged at one of the host institutions, San Jose State University. Additional work beyond attendance and full participation at the institute is not required to earn this credit.

**Application Procedures and Deadlines**

(see web site for NEH Application Instructions and link to cover letter)

The application cover sheet is available on the NEH website. Your completed application should be postmarked no later than March 1, 2011 and should be addressed to: Susan Shillinglaw, Department of English, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA 95192. Please send three copies of your complete application, including all letters of recommendation.

Applications should include the information required by the National Endowment for the Humanities (see website for application download): An application cover sheet (completed and submitted online and printed to enclose with the application); a resume of educational background, noting specific courses taken in American literature and related subjects; a brief essay (no more than 4 double spaced pages) describing the applicant’s reasons for applying—both academic and personal; and two letters of recommendation. We recommend that one letter be from someone who can speak to your teaching experience, and one be from someone outside your institution who knows your intellectual interests and strengths. The essay is an important part of the application and should address qualifications, goals for the project—including any individual research and writing projects—and the relation of the study to teaching assignments.

Three reviewers will evaluate the applications for the institute: These include both program directors and one local high school teacher.

We look forward to a series of productive discussions together, stimulated and enriched by the historical and contemporary backdrop of the historic Monterey Peninsula. Our goal is to invite NEH Summer Scholars into a conversation that examines connections, the ways in which
literature, history, geography, science, and social awareness intersect. This is the broad vision that Steinbeck embraced. We hope each NEH Summer Scholar will come away with a richer appreciation of the ways that Steinbeck’s sense of place—both local and national—inform his social, historical, and ecological vision of America. We trust that each NEH Summer Scholar will take ideas and knowledge back to students for further discussion and exploration. Please join us!

Sincerely yours,

[Signatures]

Dr. Susan Shillinglaw and Dr. William Gilly
Co-Directors, Steinbeck Institute