

# CURRENTS: Humanities Work Now

## The Page Electric: Writing Mediums and Radical Reform in the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century US

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Spring 2025 Dresher Center Residential Faculty Fellow

This talk will illuminate the practices, politics, and print forms of writing mediums--writers who believed they were being guided by spirits--in the mid-nineteenth-century U.S. With a focus on spirit letters, clairvoyant medical guides, and trance poetry, Lindsay DiCuirci will consider how writing mediums sought social reform through epistemic rupture and compositional experimentation. Centered in the "burned-over district" of western New York in the 1850s, these mediums were not only channeling the dead but also challenging the living to reimagine the socio-political order, tackling issues like abolition, women's liberation, and prison reform. The talk will conclude with a reflection on the methods that Humanists use--and avoid--to write about spiritual matters and experiences in the past. How should scholars take spirit communications seriously as "evidence," write about them as phenomena, and approach them with something other than incredulity?

**Monday, March 24**

Dresher Center Conference Room (PAHB 216) and online via WebEx

**If you are interested in ordering a boxed lunch, please register at the link in the QR code.**

