**Purpose:** The Mellon Foundation’s Sawyer Seminars program was established in 1994 to provide support for collaborative research on historical and contemporary topics of major scholarly significance. The seminars, named in honor of the Foundation's long-serving third president, John E. Sawyer, bring together faculty, foreign visitors, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students from a variety of fields mainly, but not exclusively, in the arts, humanities, and interpretive social sciences, for intensive study of subjects chosen by the participants. This program aims to engage productive scholars in multi-disciplinary and comparative inquiry that would (in ordinary university circumstances) be difficult to pursue, while at the same time avoiding the institutionalization of such work in new centers, departments, or programs.

**Program Activities:** To date, 200 seminars have been funded. Their subjects, which have ranged widely, can be viewed on our [website](#).

The maximum grant award for each Sawyer Seminar is $225,000. Each seminar normally meets for one year, though some have continued for longer periods. To allow for planning, seminars need not be scheduled for the coming academic year. Faculty participants largely come from the humanities and interpretive social sciences, although some of the most successful and provocative seminars have also drawn on faculty in the arts and in professional schools. Seminar leaders are encouraged to invite participants from nearby institutions, such as community colleges, liberal arts colleges, museums, research institutes, etc. As the Foundation reviews proposals, preference will be given to those that include concrete plans for engaging participants with diverse institutional and disciplinary affiliations.

Sawyer Seminar awards provide support for one postdoctoral fellow to be recruited through a national competition, and for the dissertation research of two graduate students. It is expected that the graduate students will be active participants in the intellectual life of the seminar. The seminars' contribution to graduate education in the humanities and social sciences will be carefully considered even though they are not intended to be organized as official credit-bearing courses. Seminars are not expected to produce a written product, though many do.

**Selection and Award Process:** Each year approximately twenty institutions are invited to submit a seminar proposal in a limited submission process; the invitation list changes annually, as recent awardees return to the rear of a line of roughly 60 potential invitees. The Foundation expects university administrators to convey the invitation broadly to members of the faculty and to inform their communities of the way a local proposal will be selected for submission.

Proposal should be submitted through the Foundation’s [online grant portal](#). Once a proposal has been invited, an institutional contact will then gain access to the application in
the portal, as designated in the invitation letter. This person can grant access to additional contacts and remove themselves as necessary. The application consists of the following:

1. An executive summary (description of proposed work).
2. The rationale for raising the central questions to be addressed and the potential significance of the inquiry to be pursued.
3. A description of the cases to be studied (e.g., nations, regions, time periods, cultural trends, social tensions) and the perspectives to be brought to bear on them; the thematic “threads” that will run through the seminar; and the institution’s resources and suitability for the proposed seminar.

*Note: The text covering these first three components typically ranges from 3,000 to 6,000 words and must not exceed 8,000 words.*

4. The procedures to be used in selecting graduate and postdoctoral fellows.
5. A well-developed preliminary plan for the seminar that outlines the specific topics to be addressed in each session and provides the names and qualifications of the scholars who would ideally participate.
6. A budget and budget narrative, as prompted within the system and informed by the budget guidance below.
7. Short CVs (1-2 pages) for the principal seminar organizers. If other participants are identified, please limit information about them to a few lines of text, either within the proposal or as part of this appendix.
8. A letter of endorsement from an institutional officer.

The proposal, budget, and budget narrative should be entered in the appropriate fields in the system. Each of the components outlined above will be entered into its own field, with the exception of the CVs and endorsement letter, which should be attached as PDFs. There is an additional compliance section in the online application. While we do expect this to be completed, it is required for internal purposes, and will not be viewed by the selection panel.

Following approval by the Foundation’s Trustees, funds are disbursed to the host institution. Annual reports on the progress of the seminar are required for the grant term.

**Budget:** Funding requests should not exceed $225,000 for each seminar. Each seminar’s budget must provide for a postdoctoral fellowship to be awarded for the year the seminar meets, and two graduate student dissertation fellowships to be awarded for the seminar year or the year that follows. The amounts for postdoctoral fellowship awards and dissertation fellowship stipends should follow institutional practices. To acknowledge the sustained intellectual involvement of these graduate students in the seminar, institutions may include tuition support or, for those funded by existing fellowships, supplementary support such as research and travel funds. Travel and living expenses for short stays by visiting scholars and the costs of coordinating the seminar, including those incurred for speakers and their travel, may also be included. Funds may not cover released time for regular faculty participants, or indirect costs.