The rights, tensions, and ideas that inform the contemporary human experience were explored by the Schools of Historical Studies and Social Science last fall during a weekend of programs in honor of the Institute’s eightieth anniversary. The discourse, excerpted of which appear below, examined the power of anonymous speech in antiquity and on the Internet; the sublimation of emotion in amnesty and political theatricality; the influence of gender on the reinterpretation of the fields of history and social science; and the conception and challenges of human rights from historical, philosophical, political, and sociological perspectives.

“Anonymous speech shifts costs from the speaker to the listener. The listener has to figure out who is speaking, what their motives are, what the reason is for their anonymity, and in doing so, in making all those interpretations, a listener can go badly wrong. . . . Anonymity also blurs the formal but artificial line between private and public, and uses intimacy to establish trust that can have political consequences.”
—Danielle S. Allen, UPS Foundation Professor, School of Social Science

“As far as we can know, the Greeks were the first who established the institution of amnesty. . . . The Greeks responded to the fundamental dilemma of amnesty, which is the choice between the right of the dead—the right of revenge—and the advantage of the living—reconciliation and concord. This is a conflict between emotion—anger—and reason—reconciliation and going ahead with life in a peaceful society.”
—Anastasia Chaniotis, Professor, School of Historical Studies

Exams celebrating the Institute’s eightieth anniversary included a discussion on gender’s role in the fields of history and social science by Joan Wallach Scott (left) and Caroline Walker Bynum (middle), and a panel on human rights moderated by Harald Shapiro, an Institute Trustee.