"The Search For Common Ground: Culture in California’s Central Valley," is a two-year Humanities Initiatives Grant Project (#AC-226761-15) funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities aimed at fostering discussions and curricular development that critically explore the rich cultural heritage, daily life and struggles of those who live in California’s Central Valley. You are cordially invited to attend the Common Ground Project end-of-grant conference hosted by Modesto Junior College on October 21, 2016 from 9am-9pm.

This special day includes a keynote address by Luis Valdez--American playwright, actor, writer and film director. Vital to the growth of Chicano theater, Valdez is best known for his play Zoot Suit, his movie La Bamba, and his creation of El Teatro Campesino.

The day also includes workshops lead by eminent scholars from University of California and California State University schools and the National Steinbeck Center, as well as other institutions of higher learning, community leaders and artists. Workshop themes include: Concepts of Home and Identity in the Central Valley; Multiculturalism, the Politics of Recognition and Political Philosophy; How Food Shapes Culture; Hispanic Immigration & Assimilation; Working Class Culture in the Central Valley; Exploring Central Valley Visual Memories

The one-day conference closes with a reception and special premier of San Joaquin Blues (a play written and directed by Michael Lynch) which explores issues of musical expression, economic growth, historical change and identity in the California’s Central Valley.

Because of the long day and late release, if you are travelling and require overnight accommodations, please contact Jacquelin Wingett at wingettj@yosemite.edu as there are a limited number of travel stipends available to defer the cost of travel. We hope that you consider joining us on October 21, 2016 for a day of lecture, conversation and interdisciplinary explorations of the rich cultural heritages of California’s Central Valley.
**In Search of Common Ground: Culture in California’s Central Valley**

**Regional Conference**

October 21st, 2016  
Modesto Junior College  
8:30 am – 9:00 pm

8:30 – 9:00 Registration (coffee and pastries)

9:00 – 9:30 Welcome, Introductions, Overview of NEH Common Ground Project

9:30 – 10:30 **Keynote Address:** Luis Valdez and *El Teatro Campesino*

10:30 – 10:45 Break

10:45 – 12:00 **Workshop I Cycle** *(Participants may choose to attend one of the following workshops)*  
Sierra Hall 137 (Large); Sierra Hall 132 (Medium); Sierra Classrooms 128, 129, 133

1- **Working Class Culture in the Central Valley**—

Jan Goggans, UC Merced, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts. The recipient of a Kevin Starr California Studies Postdoctoral Fellowship, Dr. Goggans focuses on cultural expression in and of the Great Depression as well as the literatures and cultures of California. This topic draws from her book: California on the Breadlines: Dorothea Lange, Paul Taylor, and the Making of a New Deal Narrative. **Ma Vang, former University of California Presidents Postdoctoral Fellow.** Ma Vang is currently Assistant Professor in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts at UC Merced. Her research focuses on the Hmong diaspora, particularly on the politics of historical knowledge production at the intersections of US Cold War historiography and Hmong historical memory.
2- **Exploring Central Valley Memories: Visual Anthropology—**

Steve Arounsack, Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology at California State University, Stanislaus. He is a filmmaker and media developer whose productions have showcased on PBS and at public and private venues across the country.

3- **Eating in the Central Valley: How Food Shapes Culture—**

Mario Sifuentez, Assistant Professor of History at UC Merced. His research interests include immigration, farm worker history, labor history, food studies and the absence of workers in food studies. His recently published book is entitled *By Forest or By Fields: Organizing Immigrant Labor in the Pacific Northwest* and is also creating the Central Valley Oral History Project at UC Merced.

12:00 – 12:45 LUNCH with Musicians of San Joaquin Blues

1:00 – 2:00 Brief Planetarium Show of “The Cosmos and the Central Valley” or panel discussion

**Know Your Place:** Concepts of Home and Identity in the Central Valley- Jason Winfree (Professor of Philosophy, CSU Stanislaus); Rick Kamber (Professor of Philosophy, The College of New Jersey and President, The Association for Core Text and Courses) and Jim Tuedio (Dean, College of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at CSU Stanislaus). This panel discussion will focus on the intersection of philosophical notions of place, the praxis of local musical production and notions of individual and collective cultural identities.
Workshop II Cycle (Participants may choose to attend one of the following workshops) Sierra Hall 137 (Large), Sierra Hall 132 (Medium), Sierra Classrooms 128, 129, 133

1- Cultural Clashes: Hispanic Immigration & Assimilation—
Alex Saragoza, Associate Professor of Chicano/Latino Studies at the Department of Comparative Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Saragoza was the co-Director of the NEH Summer Institute for Teachers, Peralta Historical Park, Oakland, CA (2012). Dr. Saragoza studies the historical interface between processes of racialization and inequity in Latin America, especially Mexico and Cuba, and their intersections with immigration to the U.S.. His research interests include Reaganism and its repercussions for Mexicans in the U.S. as well as tourism as a means to examine changes in the national imaginary of Mexico and Cuba in the neoliberal era.

2- Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition and Political Philosophy—
Andrew Fiala is a Professor of Philosophy at Fresno State, Director of the Ethics Center, and columnist for the Fresno Bee. He is co-editor of the journal, "Philosophy in the Contemporary World." And he writes a column on religion and ethics for the Fresno Bee. Fiala has published books and articles on war, pacifism, political philosophy, and religion. Dr. Fiala will present on the philosophical tensions of citizenship, political participation, voter education within the context of a liberal, multicultural democratic state. How do we honor American traditions of strong individualism, while supporting spaces for ethnic and multicultural autonomy while simultaneously meeting collective needs for a common civic education?

3- Cultural Clashes: Hispanic Immigration & John Steinbeck—
Susan Shillinglaw is the Executive Director of the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas, California. Dr. Shillinglaw has been a Professor of English at San Jose State University and has been teaching and writing about Steinbeck for more than 27 years. She has published widely on John Steinbeck, including: Carol and John Steinbeck: Portrait of a Marriage and On Reading The Grapes of Wrath as well as A Journey into Steinbeck’s California. She also wrote introductions to several of Steinbeck books for Penguin New American Library.
3:45 – 4:00  Break

4:00 – 4:30  Common Ground Curricular Share--

NEH Common Ground Cohort and Vincent Biondo (Professor of Philosophy at Fresno State University and Project Director of “The California Pluralism Project: A Digital Humanities Archive for Civility and Citizenship Education,” a two-year project, comprised of a conference and online materials development activities, on the subject of religious and cultural pluralism in California).

4:30-6:00  Respite/ Participants dine in local restaurants featuring farm-to-form offerings.

6:15-6:45  Pre-Theatrical Reception (MJC Foundation)

7:00-9:00  Production of San Joaquin Blues (MJC East Auditorium)

*Entrance included in conference registration.*