University Center for the Humanities Events

2013

2013-14 Series Brochure - Changing Climates

University Center for the Humanities

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Welcome

In our 2013-14 series, “Changing Climates,” the Center for the Humanities brings together scientists and humanists to consider how our climate is changing and what we need to know and do in response. Scientific research is defining issues that concern everybody, including the warming of the globe, the toxicity of our environment, and the fundamental changes we are making to the natural world. Scientists are giving us an opportunity, even a necessity, to talk across the usual boundaries within the University and throughout the community.

The climate of our public discourse is changing, and the humanities are at the center of this conversation. “Changing Climates” is designed to nurture communal dialogue among scientists, humanists, social scientists, artists, politicians, and citizens from all perspectives who live together in a changing world.

“Changing Climates” provides a forum for a mingling of voices and ideas to address the critical science issues of our day. We invite you to join us.

Katherine Joslin, Director; Scott Bade, Coordinator
About the Center

The mission of the Center is to recognize and support the humanities at Western Michigan University. As a gathering place for dialogue, the Center acts an incubator for the exchange of ideas among faculty, emeriti, alumni, undergraduate and graduate students, and people in the wider community. Through the understanding of diverse cultural, professional, political, and intellectual landscapes, we nurture engaged academic and community life.

*The University Center for the Humanities is learner centered, discovery driven, and globally engaged.*

Visit the University Center for the Humanities online at www.wmich.edu/humanities.

*All events are free and open to the public.*
Michele Oka Doner

September 26, 2013 | 5:30 p.m.
Kalamazoo Institute of Arts | 314 S. Park St., Kalamazoo, MI
“The Ocean as Inspiration, the Ocean as Fabricator”

Michele Oka Doner is an internationally renowned artist whose production encompasses sculpture, furniture, jewelry, public art, functional objects and video. Her work is fueled by a lifelong study and appreciation of the natural world, from which she derives her formal vocabulary. She has created over 35 public art installations, including Radiant Site at New York’s Herald Square subway, Flight at Washington’s Reagan International Airport, and A Walk on the Beach at The Miami International Airport.

In this talk artist Michel Oka Doner will discuss works of art, such as the mile long bronze and terrazzo floor at the Miami International Airport, that have been inspired by walks on the beach and Sargassum, a recently completed installation in glass at the Miami Intermodal Center. Another ocean, the Devonian Ocean under Michigan, will be referenced with images from Ancient Art at the Mott Children’s Hospital in Ann Arbor. Two columns, Ebb and Flow, accreted in the ocean using methods that replicate the body’s ability to create bone will explain how we can both heal and grow, physically and metaphorically.
Bill McKibben is not a person you’d expect to find handcuffed in the city jail in Washington, D.C. But that’s where he spent three days in the summer of 2011, after leading the largest civil disobedience in thirty years to protest the Keystone XL Pipeline. A few months later the protesters would see their efforts rewarded when President Obama agreed to put the project on hold. His new book is *Oil and Honey: The Education of an Unlikely Activist*.

McKibben realizes that this small and temporary victory on the Pipeline is at best a stepping-stone. With the Arctic melting, the Midwest in drought, and Sandy scouring the Atlantic, the need for much deeper solutions is obvious. Some of those would come at the local level, and McKibben recounts a year he spends in the company of a beekeeper raising his hives as part of the growing trend toward local food. Other solutions would come from a much larger fight against the fossil-fuel industry as a whole. *Oil and Honey* is McKibben’s account of these two necessary and mutually reinforcing sides of the global climate fight—from the absolute center of the maelstrom and from the growing hive of small-scale local answers to the climate crisis.
Kenneth Chang has been a science reporter at *The New York Times* since 2000. He was once a graduate student in physics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before switching careers to writing about science instead of doing science. After obtaining a science writing degree from University of California, Santa Cruz, he has also written for the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Star-Ledger* in Newark, N.J. and ABCNEWS.com.

There are two enduring, and contradictory, criticisms of how mainstream media like *The New York Times* approach hot button issues like climate change. One is that the articles are thinly veiled polemics pushing preordained political views. The other is that reporters offer up mindless “balance” – giving opposing sides equal time and space even if one side is obviously more correct.

The actual goals of what can be conveyed in the space of a newspaper article -- usually a few hundred words -- are narrow in scope and ambitious in spirit: an accurate representation of the prevailing science and views.
Peggy Shepard

February 20, 2014 | 6 p.m.
2452 Knauss Hall, WMU
“Advancing Environmental Health & Justice: A Community Perspective”

Peggy Shepard is co-founder and executive director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice in West Harlem, which has a 24-year history of engaging residents in community planning and campaigns to affect environmental protection and health policy. A recipient of the Calver Award, the Heinz Award for the Environment, and the Jane Jacobs Medal for Lifetime Leadership from the Rockefeller Foundation, she is a past chair of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Environmental Justice Movement has worked over the past 20 years to impact environmental policy to improve environmental health and protection in communities of color and low income. This presentation will define environmental justice and discuss its challenges and achievements through the years. It will highlight WE ACT’s work in Northern Manhattan neighborhoods as well as the evolution, research and policy processes and outcomes of a community-based participatory research partnership that has had multi-level impacts on environmental health policy concerning air quality and related environmental justice concerns.
Sandra Steingraber

March 13, 2014 | 8 p.m.
Dalton Theatre, Light Fine Arts Building, Kalamazoo College, 1200 Academy Street
A Reading from Raising Elijah: Protecting Children in an Age of Environmental Crisis

Sandra Steingraber is an ecologist, author, cancer survivor and internationally recognized expert on the environmental links to cancer and human health. With a PhD in biology and an MA in English, she translates between scientists and activists, and has testified in the European Parliament, before the President’s Cancer Panel, and in briefings to Congress and before the United Nations. She is also the author of Living Downstream, Having Faith, and Post-Diagnosis. Currently, she is the scholar in residence at Ithaca College.

Our children face an environment more threatening to their health than any generation in history. In Raising Elijah Sandra Steingraber confronts this crisis with precise science and a lyrical, witty, moving memoir. Each lively chapter of this unique book focuses on one of the universals of childhood—milk, laundry, pizza, homework, the “Big Talk”—and explores the hidden, social, political and historical forces behind it. Throughout, Steingraber demonstrates how closely the intimate world of parenting connects to the public world of policy-making and how the ongoing environmental crisis is, fundamentally, a crisis of family life.
Osama Madany is professor of English literature and Chair of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Menoufiya University, Egypt. He is founder of American Studies Alumni Circle at the Binational Fulbright Commission in Cairo and is a member of the Selection Committee for Fulbright Pre and Post - Doctoral Programs in the Social Sciences Focusing on American Studies. He has received three Fulbright grants, including a 2014 grant to conduct research at Western Michigan University.

Professor Madany examines various manifestations of the current cultural scene in Egypt that are gradually de-centering a politically repressive order. It is a scene empowered by and empowering youths, giving voice to a repressed majority, an on-going process with many arduous strides yet to be taken. Such efforts by a young generation have shifted the borders of a nation’s cultural consciousness and are gradually fermenting, alongside other forces, toward the shifting of a whole country’s political and social structure.
Become a Friend of the Humanities

**Who?** Friends of the Humanities form a community dedicated to strengthening the humanities in the Kalamazoo community and on the Western Michigan University campus.

**How?** To become a Friend of the Humanities, individuals, organizations, and companies are invited to make an annual gift to the University Center for the Humanities through the WMU Foundation by visiting www.wmich.edu/humanities/giving.

**Why?** Given the wide-ranging activities of the Center, private donors can have a real impact. Even smaller amounts go a long way to enhancing the opportunities for citizens, scholars, and students to do research, write books, give lectures, organize discussions, and work in the community.

**What?** Friends of the Humanities will receive invitations to special events, including a fall gathering of people from the community and University. At events, you will have reserved seating, opportunities to meet and talk with guest speakers and visiting scholars, and invitations to receptions. As a member, you will receive brochures, postcards, emails, and an annual report with detailed information about all of our activities so that you will see how your donation enhances the humanities at WMU and in Kalamazoo.
Series Partners:

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Kalamazoo College
Kalamazoo Environmental Council
Kalamazoo Institute of Art
Sierra Club
Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
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Calendar

2013-2014 Changing Climates

September 26, 5:30 p.m. | Michele Oka Doner | Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

October 10, 7 p.m. | Bill McKibben | Miller Auditorium, WMU

November 21, 6 p.m. | Kenneth Chang | Knauss Hall 2452, WMU

February 20, 2014, 6 p.m. | Peggy Shepard | Knauss Hall 2452, WMU

March 13, 2014, 8 p.m. | Sandra Steingraber | Dalton Theatre, Light Fine Arts Building, Kalamazoo College

May 15, 2014, 6 p.m. | Osama Madany | Knauss Hall 2452, WMU