2015

2014-15 Annual Report

University Center for the Humanities

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/humanities_events

Part of the Higher Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation

http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/humanities_events/24

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the University Center for the Humanities at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Center for the Humanities Events by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
At the Center...

The Western Michigan University Center for the Humanities continues to flourish in its fifth year, demonstrating the central place of the humanities in the life of our campus and throughout our community. Our grassroots effort began in 2010-11 with philosopher Martha Nussbaum and her book “Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities.” Since then, our focus has reflected the interests of leaders in the humanities represented in our annual speaker series: 2011-12 Convergence of Cultures, 2012-13 Power and Publics, 2013-14 Changing Climates, and 2015-15 Healing Arts.

Healing Arts celebrated Kalamazoo’s rich history as a community dedicated to health and well-being as well as the opening of the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine. The dynamic collection of speakers and topics was designed to look closely at the link between medicine and art.

Building upon our engagement with the wider community and their support for our speakers and events, this year’s speaker series attracted over 4500 people. When we began in 2010, we had hoped to attract 100 people to our events.

In November of 2014, “Life of Pi” author Yann Martel met with over 100 students in the Lee Honors College and then spoke to over 1300 at Miller Auditorium. In conjunction with the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, the center hosted acclaimed author of “The Omnivore’s Dilemma” Michael Pollan at Miller Auditorium. Pollan engaged with the largest crowd ever at a WMU Center for Humanities event, over 2700 people. These free events have attracted over 4000 people from our campus and community. Bringing the community together in these ways establishes the value of the humanities outside the university.

Our mission is to nurture ideas and to act as an incubator for projects within the University and community. As we have seen clearly over the past year, we are on an upward and steady course.

Center Staff

Brian C. Wilson, acting director
Scott Bade, coordinator

Lori Diehl, administrative assistant
Jason Aiello, graphic designer

Randall Janes, coordinator, Humanities for Everybody
Kristyn Canary and Donald Wirtz, undergraduate interns
# Table of Contents

5  
Advisory Board

6  
Lecture Series

9  
Special Programs

10  
Faculty Fellowships

11  
Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups

17  
Humanities for Everyone

19  
Looking Ahead
Our Mission
The mission of the Western Michigan University Center for the Humanities is to recognize and support the humanities. As a gathering place for dialogue, the center acts as 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 an engaged and vital academic life.

The WMU Center for the Humanities, in all its programs, is learner centered, discovery driven, and globally engaged.

About the Humanities
The deep wellsprings of humanities scholarship have long been honored in higher education and continue to provide fundamental intellectual resources for exploring the issues of our day. Rooted in diverse perspectives, the humanities comprise the classics, languages, literature, philosophy, ethics, history, jurisprudence, religion, archaeology, cultural studies, the social sciences, such as cultural anthropology, economics, geography, political science, and sociology, and have close links to the study of visual and performing arts, the sciences, engineering, business, and health sciences. Moreover, the humanities cross disciplinary boundaries, taking up questions about the meaning of human existence that transcend the thinking of any single field of study.

A university culture that opens such pathways of appreciative understanding will both nurture diverse particular strands of scholarship in the humanities and enhance formation of connections across the university with our students and throughout our wider community.

By the Numbers
- **More than 4500** attendees at our events in our Healing Arts series.
- **Over 85** disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary events were held at the center.
- **16** graduates from the Humanities for Everybody (H4E) program.
- **8** Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups were awarded funding.

Building upon a Strong Foundation in the Humanities

Learner Centered, Discovery Driven, Globally Engaged
Advisory Board

Katherine Joslin  
English

Peter Blickle  
Foreign Languages

Lofton Durham  
Theatre

Paul Farber  
Educational Studies

Lynne Heasley  
History

Carla Koretsky  
Lee Honors College

Mary Lagerway  
Nursing

Timothy Light  
Emeritus

Ann Miles  
Sociology

Natalio Ohanna  
Spanish

Mike Pritchard  
Philosophy

Kathy Purnell  
OVPR

Joseph Reish  
Libraries

David Rudge  
Biological Sciences

Mary-Louise Totton  
Art

Brian Wilson  
Comparative Religion
In our 2014-15 series Healing Arts, the Western Michigan University Center for the Humanities celebrated Kalamazoo’s rich history as a community dedicated to health and well-being. From W.E. Upjohn to Homer Stryker, medical scientists in our community have contributed to the health of people in our state, the nation, and indeed the world. And that commitment to health has led directly to strong support for the arts and humanities in Kalamazoo, endowing the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo, as well as the Black Arts & Cultural Center, the Kalamazoo Institute of Art, the Kalamazoo Symphony, and the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, among many other organizations.

Healing Arts was designed to look closely at the link between medicine and art. Novelists, musicians, journalists, and scientists considered how these fields come together and mutually support each other. The humanities are central to this exchange of ideas about how to heal the body and mind. As humanists, we asked the critical question: How can art heal?

**Yann Martel**  
**October 23, 2014**

Cosponsored by: Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, Kalamazoo College, Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, WMU College of Arts and Sciences, WMU College of Fine Arts, WMU College of Health & Human Services, WMU Department of Anthropology, WMU Department of Biological Sciences, WMU Department of Comparative Religion, WMU Department of History, WMU Department of English, WMU Department of Philosophy, WMU Department of Sociology, WMU Haenicke Institute for Global Education, WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, Kalamazoo Public Library, WMU Lee Honors College, WMU Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations, WMU Office of Academic Affairs, Portage Public Library

Lecture: “Healing Journeys: Crossing the Pacific, Dealing with Trauma”

“Life of Pi” author Yann Martel’s wide-ranging but always engaging discussion of “Life of Pi” and his other books kept over 1300 audience members rapt for the entirety of the event. After, Martel chatted, signed books, and posed for pictures with dozens of admirers and fans.

Organized by Mary-Louise Totten, College of Fine Arts.
Lecture Series

Michael Pollan
November 6, 2014

Cosponsored by: Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, Kalamazoo College, WMU Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, WMU College of Arts and Sciences, WMU College of Fine Arts, WMU College of Health and Human Services, WMU Department of Anthropology, WMU Department of Biological Sciences, WMU Department of Comparative Religion, WMU Department of History, WMU Department of English, WMU Department of Philosophy, WMU Department of Sociology, WMU Haenicke Institute for Global Education, WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, Kalamazoo Public Library, WMU Lee Honors College, WMU Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations, WMU Office of Academic Affairs, Portage Public Library

Lecture: “Kalamazoo Community Foundation’s 2014 Community Meeting: ‘A Community Conversation about Food’”

At Miller Auditorium, Michael Pollan engaged with the largest crowd ever at a WMU Center for Humanities event, over 2700 attendees from WMU and the wider community. After the talk, Pollan graciously signed books and interacted with patrons.

Organized by Katherine Joslin, Department English.

Nellie Hermann
January 29, 2015

Cosponsored by: Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, Kalamazoo College, WMU Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, WMU College of Arts and Sciences, WMU College of Fine Arts, WMU College of Health and Human Services, WMU Department of Anthropology, WMU Department of Biological Sciences, WMU Department of Comparative Religion, WMU Department of History, WMU Department of English, WMU Department of Philosophy, WMU Department of Sociology, WMU Haenicke Institute for Global Education, WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, Kalamazoo Public Library, WMU Lee Honors College, WMU Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations, WMU Office of Academic Affairs, WMU Portage Public Library

Lecture: “Creative Writing and the Capacity for Empathy”

Nellie Hermann’s visit was cancelled due to illness. Her talk has been rescheduled for October 8, 2015.

Organized by Mary Lagerwey, Bronson School of Nursing.
Lecture Series

Arthur Kleinman
April 2, 2015

Cosponsored by: Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, Kalamazoo College, WMU Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, WMU College of Arts and Sciences, WMU College of Fine Arts, WMU College of Health and Human Services, WMU Department of Anthropology, WMU Department of Biological Sciences, WMU Department of Comparative Religion, WMU Department of History, WMU Department of English, WMU Department of Philosophy, WMU Department of Sociology, WMU Haenicke Institute for Global Education, WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, Kalamazoo Public Library, WMU Lee Honors College, WMU Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations, WMU Office of Academic Affairs, Portage Public Library

Lecture: “Caregiving and the Moral Experience”

At Shaw Theatre, Arthur Kleinman delivered a profound and moving discussion focused on caregiving and the reconsideration of its place in medical education, medical practice, and medical research. 200 students, staff, faculty and community members attended this event, including many students and instructors from the medical school.

Organized by Mary Lagerwey, Bronson School of Nursing, and Ann Miles, Department of Sociology.
Special Programs and Partnerships

Graduate Humanities Conference
Engaging Tomorrow’s Scholars

The fourth annual Western Michigan University Graduate Humanities Conference featured 8 graduate students from four departments. Mary-Louise Totton, School of Art, gave a keynote address. Moderators for the conference were Alisa Perkins, Department of Comparative Religion and Beth Bradburn, Department of English. The first place prize ($500) for best conference paper was awarded to Joel Sanford for his paper “Proof Of Heaven?: Controversy Over Near-Death Experiences In American Christianity.” The runner-up prize ($300) went to Anna Alioto for her paper “Controversy in Skeletal Biology: the Use of Pathological and Osteological Markers as Evidence for Activity Patterns.” Winning papers were published in The Hilltop Review.

Organized by Scott Bade, coordinator, WMU Center for the Humanities and Eric Mendes, Department of Comparative Religion.

Courage to Create

The Courage to Create Program, organized by Kathy Purnell, Office of the Vice President of Research, is an exciting new writing and research competition designed to encourage the love of poetry, student research in the role of writers as agents for social change, and to promote literacy in Kalamazoo Public School students. The program exposes young people to different genres of poetry and will provide a forum for parents, local writers, literacy experts and faculty/students from Kalamazoo College and WMU to build a supportive community to foster youth’s creative writing and historical research activities.

The Courage to Create Program began in November 2014 and culminated in February 2015. The program was open to all students in grades 7 to 12, and semifinalists were selected to participate in a public performance and awards ceremony on February 26, at the WMU Center for the Humanities.

Cosponsored Events

Lee Honors College’s 2014 Lyceum Lecture Series
Organized by Carla Koretsky, Lee Honors College

With/Out - Borders? Conference
Organized by Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, Kalamazoo College
Western Michigan University Center for the Humanities Faculty Fellowship for the Enhancement of the Humanities at WMU

The WMU Center for the Humanities will be offering two fellowships for the growth and enrichment of humanities at Western Michigan University, beginning in the summer of 2015. The goal of these fellowships are to encourage interdisciplinary research, collaboration, and innovative thinking about how best to stimulate undergraduate student engagement in the humanities. Expected outcomes of the research will be a publishable article and a related white paper on the revitalization of humanities at WMU. The fellows will also present a public talk on their research at the WMU Center for the Humanities in the spring semester. The fellowship entitles recipients a seat on the WMU Center for the Humanities Board for a three-year term.

The 2015-16 WMU Center for the Humanities faculty fellows are Debra Lindstrom, Occupational Health, and James Cousins, History.

Debra Lindstrom's intention during her fellowship is to scaffold concepts, such as critical thinking, that the students are learning in their humanities classes into the professional content of specific curriculums at the College of Health and Human Services. The goal is to help College of Health and Human Services students build on what they have learned in the humanities classes to help them provide excellent health care services during their fieldwork experiences and on into their lives.

James Cousin's fellowship work will look at the humanities in the context of the general education curriculum. He hopes to use the project as a way to jump start a broader conversation about the ways we teach, assess, and define humanities courses at WMU.
Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups

About the Program
The Western Michigan University Center for the Humanities offered the first annual competitive sponsorship of interdisciplinary groups working across departments and colleges on issues in the humanities. In this pilot year, five groups won awards ($500 each) to facilitate conversation across our campus and into the wider Kalamazoo community. These groups encourage and support distinctive learning and innovative teaching as well as advanced research initiatives. From such groups will come grant projects that will bring external funds into the WMU Center for the Humanities. Some groups also aim to develop a diverse, inclusive, healthy, and environmentally sustainable world. This program will continue in the fall and future semesters, and selected groups are now eligible for $1000, which includes a contribution of $500 from the College of Arts and Sciences.

Groups

Climate Change Working Group

Group Leaders: Denise Keele, Department of Political Science and Environmental and Sustainability Studies Program; Dave Karowe; Department of Biological Sciences; Paul Clements, Department of Political Science; Ron Kramer, Department of Sociology.

As climate change will affect all of us, without regard to academic discipline, the group has encouraged an integrated and interdisciplinary approach as essential to developing knowledge and encouraging action. The Climate Change Working Group is proud to report that the group now consists of about 50 faculty and staff, of which about 20 are active “core” members. Core members include faculty in the departments of Environmental and Sustainability Studies, Biological Science, Political Science, Sociology, Chemistry, English, Geosciences, Mathematics, and Geography, and also administrators and staff of the Lee Honors College, Office for Sustainability, and College of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Office. The group is focused on 3 significant goals are: Education of WMU students, faculty, and staff to increase their awareness and understanding of climate change; community outreach to engage interested citizens in activities related to climate change mitigation; and extramural funding for research and training related to climate change. Over the last three years, the group has been extremely active in meeting these goals. This year, the group was successful in the creation of a new Climate Change Studies Minor (to begin Fall 2015). Additionally, the group completed a Pilot Introductory Course in Fall 2014 featuring 12 guest lectures and sponsorship of lunch for participating faculty and students. Approximately 20 guest lectures by working group faculty were given to classes in CHEM, PHYS, ENG, SOC, ENVS. The Climate Change Working Group coordinated the Lee Honors College Lyceum Lecture Series (Spring 2015) on “Sustainable Energy Futures.” The group sponsored and conducted a Community Common Read and Public Discussion of Naomi Klein’s This Changes Everything. In addition, the group met with President Dunn to continue to make him aware of their activities and to continue to find ways for us to align with and support the broader University mission to become carbon neutral.
Groups (cont)

On the Flourishing of Teachers: Exploring the Question Across the Curriculum
Group leaders: Sandra Borden, School of Communication; Paul Farber, Department of Teaching, Learning, and Educational Studies; Jil Larson, Department of English.

The On the Flourishing of Teachers group continued its discussions of education and teachers across the curriculum through excellent readings of two books by William Deresiewicz: Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life; and A Jane Austen Education: How Six Novels Taught Me About Love, Friendship, and the Things That Really Matter. The group is reading Matthew Crawford's The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction through the summer sessions to further its explorations of the important questions concerning education and the vital role teachers play in creating curriculum and delivering education in the classroom, university, and community.

Realities vs. Ideal: A Roundtable for the Study of Lived Religion
Group leaders: Eric Mendes and Skylar Bauer, Comparative Religion

The Realities vs. the Ideal roundtable had another very good year in 2014-2015. Once again, the group leaders formatted the group to aid students studying aspects of lived religion by providing a place to come together and further each other's research. Students were given books related to their particular research projects, and these books were discussed in terms of their relevance for their own project, as well as their potential relevance for other peoples’ projects in the group.

Tangible outcomes of the group were numerous. Joel Sanford’s research on near death experiences and scripture was discussed and peer reviewed in the group, and the paper, presented at the WMU Humanities Conference, won first prize. Eric Mendes’ thesis on the mixing of popular culture and religion in Japanese amulets was furthered a great deal by the group. He will be defending that thesis Summer I. The papers that were developed in this group last year were presented at the American Anthropological Association’s annual meeting in a six-person panel we created on lived religion. Finally, students presented research developed in the group at the WMU East Asia Forum, Association of Academic Museums and Galleries, Midwest American Academy of Religion, and the Society and Religion Conference at U.C. Berkeley.

Opportunities and ideas that came out of this group also contributed Eric Mende’s winning of the All University Research and Creative Scholar Award. Finally, the sharing of research in this group expanded the knowledge base of all members, and contributed to Lindy Demarest’s receipt of the All University Teaching Award. Three papers that were developed in this group are also being published in the next issue of the Hilltop Review. Group leaders were proud to say that they considered this reading group a success again this year, and will be submitting an application for its continuation next year.
Globalization, Faith and Power
Group leaders: Dr. Alisa Perkins, Comparative Religion and Sevda Arslan, Political Science

During 2014-2015, the Globalization, Faith, and Power reading group enjoyed a highly productive year. Our success was marked by the interdisciplinary reach of our engagement, the growth of our group membership over the year, and the frequency of our meetings. Although we started with mainly Comparative Religion scholars, we attracted members from Psychology, Social Work and Political Science as the year progressed. We began with seven members and ended with twelve. We had a total of eight meetings over the course of the two semesters. At almost every meeting, one or two members presented their individual research, followed by lively discussion.

Over the course of our meetings, the Globalization, Faith, and Power reading group achieved our aim of engaging in sustained member-led group discussion of recent scholarship that is central importance to this field of study as well as encouraging the individual scholarship of our members. Through these means, we advanced our understanding of how intensified flows of resources, people, media and technology across borders influences the development of faith communities. A second area of analysis was to understand how globally-shaped faith communities negotiate, impact, support, or resist the power imbalances of the global north/ global south relations.

Several group members shared an interest in global aspects of Islam, so this became established as a key theme of the group at our initial, kick-off meeting. Highlights of our meetings included the following topics and themes. An early presentation focused on theoretical innovations for adopting a “networked approach” in the study of global Islam by tracing historical, geographical and cultural intersections of figures who may be thought of as “Muslim travellers”. In a subsequent presentation, an MA candidate in Psychology discussed her original research on problems and potentials for mental health counselors adopting a religious orientation when treating Muslim American women. Two other members working on Islam focused on Sufism. One presented original work on the transnational reach of the Maulid celebration, a ritual honoring the birth of Muhammad. Another presented on the junctures between Sufi women’s forms of authority and western feminist perspectives. Another group member focusing on Islam and gender presented on a recent ethnography dealing with transgender and homosexuality in the Islamic Republic of Iran. An MA candidate in Political Science discussed her original research on intersections between linguistic, political, and religious aspects of Kurdish identity in Turkey. Other students in the group worked on topics such as: Christian minorities in the Middle East, digital religion and Marion worship, and syncretic aspects of religious identity in South Asia.
Groups (cont)

STEAM Working Group
Group leaders: Maria Gigante and Gwen Tarbox, English

During the Fall 2014 semester, the Western Michigan University Center for the Humanities hosted a series of discussions on the integration of the humanities and arts into STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and research at Western Michigan University. Moderated by Dr. Maria Gigante (English), Dr. Steve Malcolm (Biological Sciences), Dr. Jocelyn Steinke (Communication), and Dr. Gwen Tarbox (English), this interdisciplinary working group facilitated discussion among graduate students, staff and faculty related to a number of STEM to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) initiatives, including:

• developing or redesigning interdisciplinary courses according to STEAM values;
• promoting educational and professional opportunities in STEAM for students;
• broadening participation of women and other underrepresented groups in STEM through STEAM transformations;
• discussing and disseminating tools and techniques from the Arts to enhance the effective communication and understanding of STEM topics; and,
• showing how an understanding of STEAM enhances life-long learning in a world full of complex technologies.

The STEAM interdisciplinary working group met 4 times during the semester to assess opportunities for developing STEAM projects at WMU and to provide recommendations for supporting these efforts. Session 1 covered Practical Applications of STEAM for Instructors and Students participants discussed selected readings on STEAM and explored the STEAM initiatives that are already underway at WMU. The second meeting was titled “Science on the Campaign Trail: Climate Change in the Clements-Upton Congressional Race,” a speech and Q&A with Paul Clements, WMU Political Science Professor. WMU professor Paul Clements discussed the interconnectedness of humanities and STEM fields as he recounted the way that he has used rhetorical practices to convert economic theory and environmental science into information that he could use to communicate to area residents as he ran for the US Congress for the MI Sixth District. Session 3 looked at STEAM Funding Opportunities. The working group discussed funding for STEAM initiatives at WMU. Guests from the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) and the College of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Office provided participants with information on external and internal funding related to STEAM projects. The final meeting of the STEAM interdisciplinary working group featured a discussion on suggestions for STEAM initiatives that could be implemented in 2015.
Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups

Groups (cont)

WMU’s General Education Program – A Brown Bag Lunch Series
Group leaders: Molly-Lynde Recchia, World Languages and Literatures; Members of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on General Education

The exploratory discussion group on WMU’s General Education Program met five times throughout the semester and each time different attendees participated. Their discussions included the following:

• current negative perceptions of WMU’s General Education program;
• widespread lack of knowledge about General Education among the various constituencies of the university community;
• other models for General Education that are currently being introduced at other institutions across the United States;
• basic concepts about what General Education can be understood to stand for, according to the AACU (Association of American Colleges and Universities);
• the importance of integrating explicit learning outcomes into General Education courses and the General Education program as a whole;
• the relationship of General Education courses to courses taken within students’ majors and minors;
• the ongoing work of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc committee on General Education to promote a newly envisaged, re-invigorated General Education that will have genuine meaning for students and all stakeholders at WMU.

The group considered the series a success because it provided a forum for discussions in which all were welcome to participate. These brown bag lunches helped the group get the word out about the work of the committee and they stimulated attendees’ thinking about this important topic.
Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups

Groups (cont)

Interdisciplinary Group on Language and Education

Group Leaders: Allen Webb, Department of English; Kristina Wirtz, Department of Anthropology; Bob Dlouhy, Center for English Language and Culture for International Students; Selena Protacio, Special Education and Literacy Studies, and Vivan Steemers, World Languages and Literatures

The Language and Education Study Group has a current email list of 80 faculty and community members. This long-time IDHG conducted four events and participated in two important additional activities. In September several members attended the 2014 With/Out - ¿Borders? Conference hosted by the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership at Kalamazoo College. October was a busy month for the Language and Education group. First, the group teamed with the Anthropology Department to provide a fascinating presentation: “We Question While We Walk: Building Community through Popular Education in Albany Park, Chicago” with Isabel Valenzuela and Tony Nelson of the Centro Autónomo presented by The Mexico-US Solidarity Network. In this presentation Isabel Valenzuela and Tony Nelson shared lessons from their work in popular education and the experience of its day to day trials and victories. Their talk had “important lessons for anyone interested in immigrant rights, radical pedagogy, community building, and the fight to change the world.” Their second event in October continued the discussion from last year on the possibility of creating an MA in TESL at WMU. Tom Marks from CELCIS lead the discussion which covered a road map for moving the project forward Decide as well choosing a chairperson to lead/organize the meetings. The group’s November event was a discussion centered on the Comparative Foreign Language Education. Panel members presented about the foreign language learning in their respective countries (regions) of origin and talk about their own experience: Mariam Konate - Burkina Faso, Fredah Mainah - Kenya, Wafa Hassan - Saudi Arabia, Vivan Steemers - Netherlands and European School. In December members of the Language and Education Interdisciplinary Humanities group joined with members of the WMU general education revision committee opportunity to talk about the role of languages in WMU’s revision of general education. In April and May of 2015 the group joined in an on-line discussion of a reading of “Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism” (2011) (an important text in the emerging field of the digital humanities). The discussion significantly addressed language and education themes.
Humanities for Everybody

For a fourth year, Western Michigan University’s Center for the Humanities collaborated with its community partners, Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services and Open Doors Kalamazoo, to provide free college-level humanities courses for adult learners in the Kalamazoo community through the Humanities for Everybody (“H4E”) Program. A dozen community participants completed at least one of the five-week course modules this program year. Eight of those participants completed multiple courses and four completed the entire four-course sequence. Supported by experienced WMU faculty volunteers, program alumni volunteers, and program staff, this community of learners engaged in wide variety of topics drawn from across humanities curriculum.

The 2014-2015 roster of courses included: 1) “Introduction to Political Philosophy” led by Dr. Kathy Purnell, Office of the Vice President of Research; 2) “Ethics and Well-Being” led by Dr. Paul Farber, Department of Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies; 3) “Medicine, Bodies and Power” led by Dr. Ann Miles, Department of Sociology; and 4) “Introduction to Gender and Women’s Studies” led by Dr. Mariam Konaté, Department of Gender and Women's Studies. H4E welcomed one new faculty member to the program this year and recognized Dr. Purnell and Dr. Konaté for their three years of service in leading courses for H4E. Beyond the classroom, H4E participants joined the staff at the WMU’s Waldo Library, Zhang Legacy Center, and Gibbs House permaculture program in experiential learning opportunities and attended public lectures by Michael Pollan and Arthur Kleinman that intersected with readings and topics from this year’s courses.

Funding for the program was provided by the John E. Fetzer Fund of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. Randall Janes, a doctoral candidate in the Department of History, was sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences to provide program support as its Program Manager. Dr. Kathy Purnell continued in her position as Program Advisor in addition to leading her third H4E course. Humanities for Everybody also welcomed back several program alums as returning participants and volunteers for the program. H4E staff and volunteers worked with community organizations in a number of outreach and recruitment activities to cultivate an active presence in the Kalamazoo community, including Mother’s of Hope, the Bank Street Farmers Market, Kalamazoo Project Connect, Kalamazoo Public Library and Kalamazoo Literacy Council.
Humanities for Everybody

As the program enters its fifth year, Humanities for Everybody continues to provide a rigorous set of humanities courses to the Kalamazoo community and remains committed to strengthening and expanding its collaborative efforts with community partners and stakeholders to ensure the program can provide an informal community venue in which participants with diverse backgrounds, beliefs and points of view can come together to critically engage complex issues, challenge assumptions and build self-efficacy and self-esteem. One of this year’s community participants highlighted the program’s success in this area, expressing that although she learned a lot about the specific topics covered in this year’s courses, her experience went beyond the particular content of individual courses:

“It is much bigger. These are all parts of systems: the political system, food system, healthcare system, system of privilege… But then, it is much smaller… It is the idea of ‘by changing yourself you have begun to change the world.’”

Former program participants have leveraged their experience in pursing their continuing education goals by attending Kalamazoo Valley Community College or committing themselves to pursue studies at Western Michigan University. Others have used their experience to engage in affecting change in their local communities, such as one former participant who was recently elected to the Kalamazoo Public School Board.

The H4E program embodies the Center’s commitment to render the humanities accessible to all and to build inclusive communities that enable all to thrive. The program was initiated by Susan Hoffmann, Department of Political Science; Rick Stravers, Executive Director of Open Doors Kalamazoo; Matt Lager, Chief Executive Officer of Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services (KNHS); Rondel Yarbrough, a graduate of WMU and Client Services Specialist at KNHS; and Katherine Joslin, Founding Director of the University Center for the Humanities.
Looking Ahead

2015-16 Series: Reimagining Community

Save these dates!

October 8, 2015 | 7 p.m. | Nellie Hermann | 2452 Knauss Hall, WMU
November 3, 2015 | 8 p.m. | Ta-Nehisi Coates | Miller Auditorium, WMU
November 6, 2015 | 7:30 p.m. | Gloria Steinem | Miller Auditorium, WMU
March 17, 2016 | 7 p.m. | Kami Pothukuchi | Dalton Center Recital Hall, WMU
April 14, 2016 | 6:30 p.m. | Helene Klodawsky | 2452 Knauss Hall, WMU

2014 – 2015 Series: Creativity
We welcome your suggestions for speakers and events.
University Center for the Humanities
Western Michigan University
2500 Knauss Hall
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008
http://www.wmich.edu/humanities

Special Thanks

Design - Jason Aiello; Photographs - Mike Lanka; Printing - JB Printing