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11-2015

## College of Arts and Sciences E-News Issue 31: November 2015

College of Arts and Sciences

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

# College of *Arts and Sciences*

e-News Issue 31: November 2015

## Upcoming CAS events



## Stay in touch!



## Update your information



CAS honors 21 Distinguished Alumni and hosts hundreds at the 2015 Homecoming tailgate festivities



## ARTS AND SCIENCES News

- ▶ New online M.A. in spirituality, culture and health emphasizes practical tools in health and human services settings
- ▶ Successful start for climate change studies minor

## FACULTY Features

- ▶ Biological Sciences – Dr. Charles Ide researches rare disease
- ▶ History – Dr. Linda Borish mentors a SEITA Scholar
- ▶ Physics – Dr. Arthur McGurn publishes new book, “Nonlinear Optics of Photonic Crystals and Meta-Materials”

## ALUMNI Profiles

- ▶ Biological Sciences – Arhea Norton '15 named College Volunteer of the Year at Kalamazoo 2015 STAR awards
- ▶ CAS alum sets his proposal in stone at Heritage Hall

## STUDENT Story

- ▶ English – Doctoral student Iliana Rocha wins the 2014 Donald Hall Prize for Poetry



Not shown, Dr. Vladislav Malyskin '97 (Physics) of St. Petersburg, Russia

# Master of Arts in Spirituality, Culture and Health



Health and human services professionals throughout the United States will benefit from Western Michigan University's unique online Master of Arts in spirituality, culture and health created to address the needs of people who serve an increasingly diverse population.

The program in the Department of Comparative Religion is based upon a cultural understanding of the body, illness and health, and emphasizes practical tools for addressing religious, spiritual and cultural diversity in health and human services settings. The curriculum promotes an advanced understanding of the impact of culture, spirituality and religious belief on patient-provider relationships, and on the process of healing in the context of the current health care and human services environment in the United States.

**The coursework for this program can be completed entirely online.** Upon completion, individuals will be able to act in a consulting role within their organization. Students will become more culturally competent, and able to forge meaningful relationships with patients or clients and their families through an understanding of religious and cultural influences on health and healing. Students can also enroll in the courses as electives to enhance cultural competence skills within other degree programs.

If you are interested in combining an [online graduate certificate in spirituality, culture and health](#) with the online Master of Arts in spirituality, culture and health, you can do so within the 30 credit hours required for the Master of Arts. You will need to apply for both the certificate and the Master of Arts programs.

If you are interested in combining an online graduate certificate in Gerontology with the online Master of Arts in Spirituality, Culture and Health can do so within the 30 credit hours required

for the Master of Arts. Students who are interested in combining a [graduate certificate in gerontology](#) will need to apply for both the certificate and the Master of Arts programs.

## **Admission**

To apply to the program, applicants must have:

- A completed bachelor's degree from an accredited institution.
- A 1200 word essay outlining the applicant's specific interest in the program and how completion of the program will contribute to the applicant's academic, professional, and personal goals.
- Three letters of recommendation from individuals who are able to evaluate the applicant's potential for graduate study. Letters can be submitted by current or former colleagues if the applicant has not had recent contact with undergraduate professors.
- Completed a graduate application.

WMU has a new online graduate application system that allows all students (domestic and international) to submit required information into one system. General application information for the University, as well as specific requirement for individual programs are captured into this system.

The Department of Comparative Religion requires applicants to include some program-specific information listed above.

### [APPLY NOW](#)

Thank you for your interest in applying for this graduate program.

## **Non degree**

Applicants who want to [take individual courses to enhance professional goals](#) can enroll in up to three spirituality, culture and health courses as a non-degree seeking student.

## **Program requirements**

The Master of Arts in spirituality, culture and health requires the completion of 30 credit hours.

### [Catalog description](#)

## **State authorization**

This online program contains a field practicum that may require the submission of a activity request form if completing this activity outside the state of Michigan at the time of enrollment for this course. However, this online program can be completed without taking a traditional field placement.

## Elective courses (18 credits)

Students may select 18 elective credits from the list below; at least 3 electives (9 credits) must be at the 6000 level or above. Not all classes are available every semester. Students in the program will be notified as additional elective courses are made available.

- REL 5000: Historical Studies (three credit hours; repeatable)
- Religion and Alternative Medicine in the United States
- REL 5100: Comparative Studies (three credit hours; repeatable)
- Death, Dying, Culture and Belief
- REL 6200: Advanced Writing Seminar in Religion (three credit hours; repeatable)
- Traditional Chinese Medicine
- Buddhist Meditation
- HOL 6910: Spirituality and the Therapeutic Process (three credit hours)
- OLP 6440: Organizational Effectiveness and Learning (three credit hours)
- REL 7100: Independent Research (one to six credits)

One undergraduate course may be selected from the following; a waiver form must be completed prior to enrollment:

- REL 3180: Death, Dying and Beyond (four credit hours)
- REL 3190: Health and Religion (four credit hours)

## Climate Change Studies Minor



Address one of the most significant challenges facing humanity and life on Earth.



•

Study at a climate leadership award-winning University.



•

Contribute to societal adaptation to global environmental change.



•

Interact with research faculty from more than 10 departments



- Connect the sciences to the human experience

Climate change is the most significant challenge facing the human race. The climate change studies minor at Western Michigan University is an interdisciplinary and integrative program involving expert faculty and courses from intersecting disciplines. This minor provides you with the necessary science-based background and a broad understanding of the human relationship to climate change, including the social and environmental causes, challenges, and opportunities for mitigation and adaptation.

[Printable program brochure](#)

## Minor

This minor is intended for undergraduates in any major and will prepare you for a variety of 21st century professional fields.

## Why study climate change?

Climate change is recognized as one of the critical challenges to the sustainability of human society and the environment. This program develops informed and engaged citizens who can use information from multiple disciplines to draw appropriate conclusions and constructively contribute to societal adaptation to global environmental change. Interacting with research faculty from more than 10 departments will prepare you to address the concerns and consequences of climate change in any number of professional settings as well as be directly significant to your life.

Connect the sciences to the human experience by:

- Understanding the science of past, present and future climate change.

- Identifying and understand the range of individual and collective human actions contributing to climate change.
- Identifying and understand the consequences of contemporary climate change with particular attention to vulnerable populations.
- Critically examining and effectively communicate a range of response strategies for the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.
- Critically examining how humans experience climate change through politics, social organization and the arts.

## Curriculum

This minor is an [interdisciplinary and integrative program of study](#) involving expert faculty and key courses from intersecting disciplines. The curriculum includes introductory courses and more advanced courses in science, social sciences and humanities.

[Program flier](#)

## Advising

Contact [Lisa DeChano-Cook](#), associate professor of geography, for more information.

**To explore this minor further, please contact one of the advisory members.**

- [Dr. Steve Bertman](#), Professor of Chemistry
- [Dr. Lisa DeChano-Cook](#), Advisor and Associate Professor of Geography
- [Dr. Duane Hampton](#), Associate Professor of Geosciences
- [Dr. Dave Karowe](#), Professor of Biological Sciences
- [Dr. Denise Keele](#), Associate Professor of Political Science and Environmental and Sustainability Studies
- [Dr. Allen Webb](#), Professor of English

## Application

To study at WMU, a climate leadership award-winning University, complete the application.

# WMU Researches Rare Disease

Olga Bonfiglio  
College of Arts and Sciences staff writer

Dr. Charles Ide, Western Michigan University's Gwen Frostic Professor of Biological Sciences, happily accepted a check for \$9,500 presented to him by Frank Cervone of Fairborn, Ohio (near Dayton) this October.

However, this check wasn't just any check nor was the man who presented it just any man. Frank Cervone, 52, has Multiple System Atrophy or MSA for short. MSA is a rare neurological disorder that impairs the body's involuntary (autonomic) functions. Formerly called Shy-Drager syndrome, the condition shares many Parkinson's disease-like symptoms, but also includes progressive failure of autonomic systems that control blood pressure, pulse rate, and even swallowing. It is a terminal illness, but so far, Cervone has beaten the odds since his diagnosis five years ago.

Cervone, who has always been an upbeat sort of man, attributes his survival to the help of his family, friends and his positive attitude.

"I was determined not to get disconnected," said Cervone. "My goal after I found out I had MSA was not to be a victim of it."

One of the ways he does this is by walking with a cane instead of confining himself to bed or a wheelchair. Cervone also writes a blog and makes media appearances whenever he can to talk about MSA to raise awareness not only to the general public but also to the medical community.

The former eight-year councilman for Fairborn, OH, had to quit politics, but he served as an advocate for Ohio H.B. 184 which passed on November 28, 2012, to designate March as "Multiple System Atrophy Awareness Month."

"There is great awareness for other diseases like cancer, but not for MSA," said Susan, Cervone's wife of 31 years who helps him with fundraising through Hope for MSA (on Facebook).



Funding research for MSA is sketchy, and WMU is one of a handful of universities studying it. Europe, Australia and especially Japan have out-funded the United States on MSA research. Yet, there is hope for a research breakthrough.

“Since 2002 we have used more high tech approaches to find out what’s happening at the molecular level,” said Ide. “We have a blue print of what’s wrong, but we still don’t understand all of the data. We’re trying to help people who suffer debilitation equivalent to that seen in the worst neurological diseases and who retain full understanding of what is happening to them.”

MSA is called an "orphan disease" because only about 100,000 people suffer from the condition in the United States, so its treatment is not a high priority for either federal agencies or pharmaceutical companies. It is associated with the degeneration of nerve cells in specific areas of the brain. This cell degeneration causes problems with movement, balance and automatic functions of the body.

The cause of MSA is unknown and no specific risk factors have yet been identified. About 55 percent of cases are among males, typical age of onset is mid- to late-50s, and the condition is extremely debilitating.

Ide says his research team is focused on some similarities found in the brain cells of multiple sclerosis patients that are similar to those found in MSA patients.

Annamarie Valenti, a master’s degree student in the Department of Biological Sciences, is working with Ide to see how drugs for diseases with autoimmune involvement, similar to MSA, may be used.

“Valenti’s research will define how MSA shares cellular and molecular level pathologies with other neurodegenerative diseases that are already being treated with a variety of drugs. Testing already approved drugs that help patients with either Multiple Sclerosis, Type 2 Diabetes, and/or Alzheimer’s disease on model MSA related systems in the laboratory might eventually help MSA patients,” said Ide.

Cervone was diagnosed with MSA in 2010 after 18-months of tests that tried to find out what was wrong with him.

He needs assistance in doing things like swallowing. Food sometimes gets stuck in his esophagus; he doesn’t sweat or have a temperature; he cries without tears. He went from 304 pounds and a 40-inch waist to 148 pounds and a 27-inch waist within three years.

“I have to deal with it every day,” said Susan. “And, I have to be practical about it every day.”

“How do people get MSA? That’s not totally known, however, the evidence is pointing to a genetic predisposition interacting with, for example, pesticides and chemicals in food, or exposure to strong solvents,” said Ide.

For several years Frank drove a truck that hauled agricultural chemicals. He also worked in many new buildings where chemicals leached out into the air. He has also lived in industrial areas where fly ash from manufacturing was present.

“Doctors really don’t know much about MSA,” said Susan, “so that’s what we’ve devoted our lives to: informing everyone about MSA.”

The couple wears purple and teal, the colors identified with MSA, in order to get a conversation going among the people they meet. They also have teamed up with others, like the Barefoot Runners of Dayton, to raise funds for MSA research. Race organizer and barefoot runner, Doug Brandt accompanied the Cervones to WMU to present a \$9,500 check to Dr. Ide.

“I always hoped there would be a researcher in a dark corner of a lab somewhere who would be working on MSA,” said Susan. “Then we found out about Dr. Ide.”

## **History Professor Linda Borish Mentors a SEITA Scholar**

Olga Bonfiglio  
College of Arts and Sciences staff writer



Dr. Linda Borish and Emmanuel Sanchez

Dr. Linda Borish first met Emmanuel Sanchez, a junior, in September 2013. He is an aviation major, and she is an American history professor at Western Michigan University. These two unlikely friends got to know each other through the Seita Scholars program.

The program is a component of the Center for Fostering Success. It supports students at WMU ages 18 to 25 who have lived at least some or all of their teenage years in foster care; some of the Scholars were taken into the custody of the State at earlier ages. While each student's foster care experience is unique, all the Seita Scholars share common challenges associated aging out of foster care and transitioning to college.

As Sanchez's mentor, Borish meets with him and together they talk about academic work, career interests, opportunities for internships, classes to take and ways to navigate the college system.

Borish decided to get involved with the Seita Scholars Program because she herself was mentored as a Skidmore College undergraduate and as a University of Maryland graduate student and found the experience of being mentored valuable.

"Students need to be courageous and seek opportunities," she said, "but they need a little help because they don't know how to navigate the complex territory of higher education, especially if they are the first ones in their families to go to college."

For example, Sanchez had an opportunity to become a resident assistant. He went to Borish to talk about it and she advised him to consider whether he had enough time to do this in addition to his job in the library.

Borish finds mentoring Sanchez a very humbling experience because it keeps in perspective the opportunities she has had compared to students with a foster care background who are just getting started in college.

"Working with Emmanuel over a period of time has allowed me to see his growth as a student and as an individual," she said. "It's a unique experience to see another side of the academic community, a more personal side that doesn't involve grades and critiques."

Mentors and Seita Scholars typically spend four hours per month with some of the time in person and some of it over e-mail, text or telephone.

"The other day Emmanuel asked if he could put my photo on Facebook," she said. "That meant a lot to me about the importance of our bond, and that I was helping him."

Sanchez finds Borish a big source of support.

"Dr. Linda has always been there for me," said Sanchez, "and I am very thankful to have her as my mentor. She has always given me advice and shown me that she believes in me. I truly appreciate her time and effort to guide me in college."

Every fall President Dunn welcomes all Seita Scholars back to campus at annual event titled the President's Welcome. This year, Seita Scholar alumni shared how mentoring benefited them. Each first year Seita Scholar then accompanied the alum's testimony with messages on a placard like "I am hard working" and "I am smart."

"It was very moving to me," said Borish.

CAS Assistant Dean James Cousins also attended the Annual Dinner and was duly impressed.

"I hope more faculty find the time to mentor a Seita Scholar," he said. "This program provides students with a unique opportunity and a great support network that can not only help them succeed at WMU, but give them lasting friendships. That's an important amenity college can give."

The scholarship is named after Dr. John Seita, a three-time alumnus of WMU who spent 15 years in foster care. It is a tuition scholarship offered to fall semester admits to WMU and is renewable each semester up to completion of the undergraduate degree. The scholarship is one key component of the Seita Scholars Program. The first class of Seita Scholars entered WMU in fall 2008.

"The 2008 Cohort of Seita Scholars persistence to graduation from WMU exceeds 39 percent compared to the national average of only 2 to 4 percent of the 25,000 aging out of the foster care system on an annual basis," said Chris Harris director of Seita at WMU. "Having our Seita Scholars paired with mentors highly increases their chance of degree completion, which leads to employment. That's the central goal of our program."

Harris added that a wide array of campus and community partners work to fund and support the Seita Scholars, including during holidays when the residence halls are closed. Many Scholars' homes are too far away for them to go there or they don't have a place to go for a traditional family celebration. The program coordinates students' housing and at least one hot meal a day during WMU's winter closure.

Each class forms a cohort that learns skills together through participation in a wide variety of on- and off-campus activities in order to build opportunities for their future. Older cohorts assist newer cohorts.

This fall there are 47 new Seita Scholars plus four returning students who had previously stopped out, which brings the total to 151 students currently enrolled at WMU and working on their undergraduate degrees.

Activities are planned for scholars to meet as a group and share ideas. Among the typical activities are bowling and pizza, a night at the Alamo Drafthouse and a trip to Chicago.

"I am thankful to be a part of a great community that focuses on the importance of education for the students," said Sanchez. "To me, the Seita program is all about support and inspiration. I believe that the Seita program works hard to walk with me during my years at Western Michigan

University. It makes me feel more confident about overcoming some of the obstacles I face as a foster student.”

The Seita Scholars program is always looking for mentors, volunteers and budget advisers. Faculty and staff who are interested should call the Seita Scholars office at 387-8344.

## **Dr. Arthur R. McGurn Publishes Physics Book**

Olga Bonfiglio  
College of Arts and Sciences staff writer



Dr. Arthur R. McGurn

Arthur R. McGurn, a physics professor at Western Michigan University, has just published a new book, *Nonlinear Optics of Photonic Crystals and Meta-Materials*.

The book is a brief introduction to the ideas and phenomena that occur in the nonlinear optics of photonic crystals and metamaterials. These are illustrated within the context of simple models which provide an easy understanding of the physical phenomena that are important in these two rapidly developing areas of nano-photonics technology.

“The book was meant to help students prepare quickly to pursue research topics in the fields of photonic crystals and meta-materials with some focus on the nonlinear optics of these systems,” said McGurn.

He provides an introduction and discussion of some of the basic principles of linear and nonlinear optical nano-systems and focuses on engineered optical systems that have been of recent interest in physics, engineering, and applied mathematics for their opto-electronic applications. These include photonic crystals and meta-materials, and in the following discussions the operating principles of photonic crystals and meta-materials are outlined. Some of the recent technological applications treated include negative refractive index, electromagnetic cloaking, the perfect lens, enhanced generation of second harmonics of radiation, and the properties of solutions.

The 134-page book is published by Morgan & Claypool Publishers. It is also available through IOP ebooks,<sup>TM</sup> a digital publisher that focuses on physics.

McGurn has been a WMU faculty member since 1981 and a full professor of physics at WMU since 1993. His area of research is in condensed matter physics and optics. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1975. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Physics, the American Physical Society, the Electromagnetics Academy and the Optical Society of America.

# WMU grad student's poetry book published, wins big award

by Mark Schwerin

September 17, 2015 | WMU News



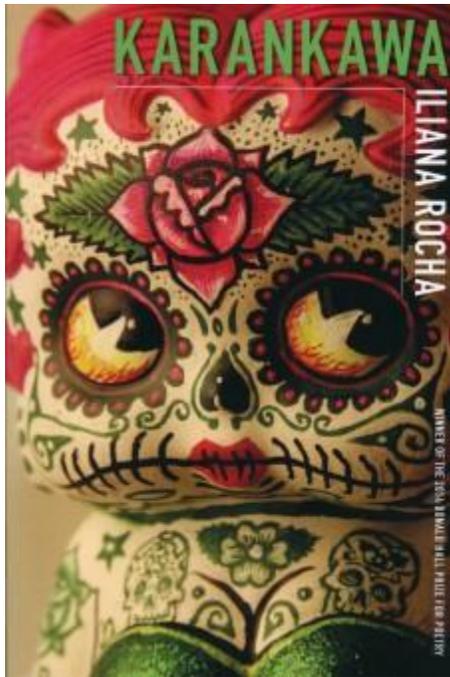
Rocha

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—A book of poems by a Western Michigan University doctoral student in English has just been published by the University of Pittsburgh Press after winning the 2014 Donald Hall Prize for Poetry.

The award, sponsored by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs and named after American poet, writer, editor and critic Donald Hall, came as a big surprise to author and student **Iliana Rocha**, who is now entering her fourth year of studies at WMU.

"I was really surprised because, up until that point, I had been submitting to book contests, and I hadn't been a finalist for anything," Rocha says. "So it was like, 'OK, we'll see how this process goes.' And then, kind of out of the blue, I was getting ready to go work at the Writing Center on campus and I get a call from AWP and they said, 'You won!' I didn't have a clue, because I didn't know I was a finalist or that I was on any kind of short list."

## Inspired by Karankawa Indians



"Karankawa" has been published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

Rocha's book is titled "Karankawa." Raised in Victoria, Texas, Rocha was inspired by the Karankawa Indians, who lived along the Texas coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Her aunt lived in the region of Texas generally inhabited by the Karankawa Indians, and her passing was the impetus for the collection.

Her book examines some of the ways people construct or reconstruct their individual histories.

"When I was doing research about them, the discussion surrounding the Karankawa centered around how they were subjected to many false myths—and then I knew I wanted to apply that to the myths of my family by rewriting significant births (including my own) and deaths," Rocha says. "Ultimately, my collection is an elegy and love letter to Texas, and I use the Karankawa as a framework to interrogate grand narratives about the self, family and place."

Winning the award comes with a \$5,500 prize in addition to publication. It was a huge accomplishment, especially for a student, says her faculty advisor, **Dr. William Olsen**, WMU professor of English.

"Iliana is an outstanding poet," Olsen says. "There is simply no greater honor for an emerging writer than to have won the AWP Prize. The Association of Writers and Writing Programs is the nation's foremost and largest organization of writers in the nation, and the Poetry Prize guarantees Iliana's book immediate readership."

## **Iliana Rocha**

Before coming to WMU, Rocha earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Houston and a master's degree in creative writing from Arizona State University in Tempe, where she was poetry editor for Hayden's Ferry Review. Her work was chosen for the "Best New Poets 2014" anthology and has appeared in Blackbird, Yalobusha Review, Puerto del Sol and Third Coast.

Rocha has been working on her poetry collection for 10 years. She credits working with Olsen and his colleague and fellow poet **Dr. Nancy Eimers**, professor of English, with honing her book into an award-winner.

"Honestly, I feel my poetry collection was picked up because of the feedback I got back from Bill and Nancy," Rocha says. "I had shown them an earlier version of the book, and they would meet with me one on one. Just having the time in a Ph.D. program to write is really special."

Native American poet Joy Harjo selected Rocha for the Hall prize. She says the book "embodies a fresh kind of creation story emerging from the Americas. We are struck by an unabashed presence of a fearless singer."

## **Impressive achievement**

Winning the prize is certainly impressive for a student, Eimers says.

"This is a very big deal," Eimers says. "The contest is open to both published and unpublished poets, so that means that Iliana was in competition not just with young writers, but with established poets. While we have had a number of students with impressive accomplishments, this is the first time one of our current students has won this award."

Rocha plans to graduate in April 2016 and will apply for various post-doctoral fellowships, as well as travel abroad fellowships. She'll also be applying for teaching positions.

"Ideally, it would be a job where I could teach poetry full time," she says. "But those jobs are few and far between. I'm still going to apply and hope for the best."

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