2012

2011-12 Annual Report

University Center for the Humanities

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University Center for the Humanities, "2011-12 Annual Report" (2012). University Center for the Humanities Events. 7.
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A Celebration of the New Year

The new University Center for the Humanities had its grand opening October 5, 2011, after a vote of approval by the Western Michigan University Board of Trustees on September 28, 2011. The center is in Room 2500 of Knauss Hall, a renovated space that was once the Space Gallery. President John Dunn cut the ribbon and welcomed faculty and students into the Center. Carl Ratner, School of Music, sang the African American spiritual “Ain’a that Good News.”

Over a hundred people attended the opening reception called “Books and Barbecue.” The event celebrated recent publications by faculty in the humanities, and authors donated signed books to begin the Center’s library. Irma Lopez, Chair, Department of Spanish, read from her new book, Confluentes y demarcaciones: la novela mexicana, 1998-2008. Natalio Ohanna, Advisory Board member, talked about “Convergence of Cultures,” the Center’s theme for the inaugural year. This theme focused a lens on the contact zones between culture and power to understand the tensions, collaborations, accommodations and conversions that accompany sustained cross-cultural encounters. It considers the intersections of ethnicity, language, religion, politics, science and culture and the innovative and creative human products of that interaction. The lecture series was designed to contest stereotypes of difference and expand the understanding of complex social dynamics.

The University Center for the Humanities is supported by Provost Tim Greene who advised and supported faculty in the grassroots effort to recognize and celebrate the humanities on our campus and throughout our community.
Overview

Our Mission
The mission of the Center 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 Center, in all its programs, is learner centered, discovery driven, and globally engaged.

About the Humanities
The humanities 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.

The deep wellsprings of humanities scholarship have long been honored in higher education, but are too often neglected, taken for granted, or regarded as the self-sufficient domains of academic specialists. Within the culture of the university, we all stand to gain from successful measures to encourage, encounter, and learn from the many forms of humanities scholarship that, as a learning community, we are able to share. 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 in our wider community.

By the Numbers
• 1300 attendees at the events in our series, “Convergence of Cultures.”
• 130 disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary events were held at the Center over this inaugural year.
• 75 faculty publications were donated to our Humanities Library.
• 5 Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups were awarded funding.
Amanda Katherine Rath
September 22-23, 2011

Amanda Katherine Rath’s visit, together with the exhibit, provided a distinctive and innovative learning experience that stressed global issues in art.

Co-sponsored with the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, the James W. and Lois I. Richmond Center for the Visual Arts, and the College of Fine Arts.

Lecture: “Improvisation within Scenes of Contrain: Contemporary Art of Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia.”

Over one hundred people attended the lecture by Amanda Katherine Rath, a fellow of the Department of Southeast Studies at Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. Her talk about the careers and critical concepts of Indonesian artists came in tandem with the Richmond Center exhibition Installation Arts: Indonesia, curated by Mary-Louise Totton, professor, Frostic School of Art.

Organized by Mary-Louise Totton, Frostic School of Art.

Richard Arum
November 3, 2011

Richard Arum continued our Campus-wide discussion of the central place of the humanities in a university education, and thus be offered advice on distinctive learning, student success, innovative teaching, and advanced research.

Co-sponsored with the Haworth College of Business, the Lee Honors College, the Office for Assessment and Undergraduate Studies, and the Office of the Provost.

Lecture: “Updated Findings on College Learning in the United States.”

Over one hundred people from WMU, Kalamazoo College, and Kalamazoo Community College attended the talk by Richard Arum, professor of sociology and education at New York University. He reported on the extended findings of his ground-breaking study, Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses. His visit follows that of Martha Nussbaum, author of Why Democracy Needs the Humanities; she was the keynote speaker during last year’s successful effort to establish the Center for the Humanities.

Organized by Nick Andreadis, Dean, Lee Honors College; Kay Palan, Dean, Haworth College of Business; Dave Reinhold, Associate Provost for Assessment and Undergraduate Studies; Jack Ruhl, Haworth College of Business.

David Carrasco
October 27-28, 2011

David Carrasco’s visit provided distinctive and innovative learning experiences for WMU students and members of the wider community in events that promoted diversity and inclusion as well as social sustainability.

Co-sponsored by the Hispanic Council of Kalamazoo, the Departments of Comparative Religion, History, and Spanish; the Medieval Institute; and the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Fine Arts.


Three hundred people from the WMU campus and the wider Kalamazoo community participated in events surrounding the visit of Harvard Professor David Carrasco, a Mexican American historian of religion. He co-produced the film “Alambrista!”, which puts a human face on the life and struggles of undocumented Mexican farm workers in the United States, and edited Alambrista and the U.S.-Mexico Border. Editor of the three-volume Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures, he received the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest honor that Mexico gives a foreign national. Events surrounding his visit included: a screening of “Alambrista!” with a discussion led by Guillermo Martinez, a longtime advocate of migrant and seasonal farm workers’ rights in Michigan; a Haenicke Institute for Global Education brown-bag lunch for students; and a collaborative talk with Sarah Hill, Department of Anthropology, about her award-winning essay, “The War for Drugs: How Juárez became the world’s deadliest city.”

Organized by Blain Auer, Department of Comparative Religion.

Claudia Stevens
November 8, 2011

Claudia Stevens’s work promotes diversity and aims to achieve environmental sustainability.

Co-sponsored with the Center for the Study of Ethics in Society and the College of Fine Arts.

Performance: “Pigeon: a Theatrical Performance and Discussion.”

An audience of musicians, professors, students, and members of the wider community attended the performance by Claudia Stevens, a playwright and musician, whose original monologue featured the activism of the animal rights advocate Dame Miriam Rothchild.

Organized by Michael Pritchard, Department of Philosophy; Sandra Borden, School of Communication.
Jim Torczyner
January 25-26, 2012
Jim Torczyner’s visit provided distinctive and innovative learning experiences for WMU students and members of the wider community in events that promoted global understanding, diversity and inclusion as well as social and economic sustainability.

Co-sponsored by the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, the Department of Foreign Languages, the School of Social Work; the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Fine Arts, and Health and Human Services.

Lecture: “Fifteen Years Creating Engaged Citizenry in the Middle East: Building Strong Communities in Jordan, Israel, and Palestine through Rights Advocacy.”

Over two hundred people attended events surrounding the visit of Jim Torczyner, founder of the McGill University Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building. His lecture explored a model of rights-based community practice that empowers more than 120,000 people in the Middle East, where he has been awarded the Gold Medal of the Jordan Red Crescent. Other events included: a Haenicke Institute for Global Education brown-bag lunch; and an “Edison United” forum and panel discussion with community leaders from the Edison Neighborhood at the Hispanic American Council, organized by social work faculty member Don Cooney. Jim Torczyner’s visit was covered by the Kalamazoo Gazette.

Organized by Natalio Ohanna, Department of Spanish, and Jodi Michaels, Director of Communications, International Community Action Network.

Art Caplan
February 23, 2012
Art Caplan’s visit offered advice in constructing distinctive and innovative curriculum in our Medical School and reinforced local efforts to build a diverse, inclusive and healthy community, and to promote social sustainability.

Co-sponsored by the School of Medicine, the College of Health and Human Services, and the Center for the Study of Ethics in Society.

Lecture “The Inevitability of Rationing and How to Be Fair about It.”

Three hundred people from WMU and the wider Kalamazoo community attended events surrounding the visit to Campus of Art Caplan, the director of the Center for Bioethics and the Sidney D. Caplan Professor of Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania. In the morning, he talked with the curriculum committee of WMU’s new School of Medicine; at noon, he reported on the Human Papillomavirus Vaccination controversy; and in the afternoon he lectured to a standing-room only crowd on the ethics of rationing healthcare.

Organized by Fritz Allhoff, Department of Philosophy; Shirley Bach, Emerita; Hal Jenson, Dean, School of Medicine.

Sonya Bernard-Hollins
March 22, 2012
The exhibit and talk encouraged undergraduates and graduate students at WMU to visit the Regional Archives to do original research, and thus provided a distinctive and innovative learning experience and promoted diversity and inclusion.

Co-sponsored by the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, the University Libraries, and the College of Education.

Lecture: “Discovering Merze Tate: How to Uncover the Hidden Treasures in Your Archives and Bring Them to Life.”

Fifty students, faculty, and members of the wider Kalamazoo community attended Sonya Bernard-Hollins’s talk about her adventure in putting together the story of Merze Tate (WMU, 1927), one of the first African-American graduates of our university, who went on to Oxford University for a doctorate and to Howard University as a faculty member. She became a generous donor to WMU, giving back to the institution that gave her strong support during the time of Jim Crow in America. Sonya Bernard-Hollins’s exhibit of photographs and manuscripts that document Tate’s life was displayed in the Center during the month of March. The Office of Development and Alumni Relations sponsored a luncheon for friends of WMU who have an interest in Tate’s life.

Organized by Tom Bailey, Department of English; Sharon Carlson, University Libraries; Tom Egan and Nikki Perk, Office of Development and Alumni Relations.

Jen Bervin
March 28, 2012
Her workshop and talks offered truly distinctive and innovative modes of teaching and learning that encouraged students and members of the community to advance initiatives in the arts.

Co-sponsored with the Friends of Waldo Library, the Women’s Caucus, the Department of English, the Gwen Frostic Reading Series, and Kalamazoo Book Art Center.

Lecture: “Small Infinities—Emily Dickinson’s Manuscripts.”

Two hundred people attended events during Jen Bervin’s week-long visit to Kalamazoo to talk about the poetry of Emily Dickinson and to lead a workshop on textile art at the Kalamazoo Book Art Center, where she gave a reading of her own poetry. Her textile art is displayed in the Getty Museum, Yale and Stanford Universities, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and the British Library.

Organized by Nancy Eimers, Department of English.
Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups

About the Program
The Center 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 advance research initiatives. From such groups will come grant projects that will bring external funds into the Center. 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

The Study of Climate Change: Working Toward a More Livable Future
Anthropogenic global warming and associated climate change are among the most critical scientific and social problems facing the world today. The Interdisciplinary Humanities Group for the Study of Climate Change (IHGCC) initiated a conversation across the university concerning these important issues. As the result of our conversations and collaborations the IHGCC hopes to generate interdisciplinary research grant proposals and team-taught courses.

A third major goal of the group will be community outreach, primarily through the organization of public presentations related to the critical problems of global warming and climate change.

Group Leaders: Ron Kramer, Department of Sociology; Dave Karowe, Department of Biological Sciences; Paul Clements, Department of Political Science.

On the Flourishing of Teachers: Institutional and Ethical Issues in Practice
This group discussed teaching as a virtuous moral practice to provide a humanistic framework that crosses disciplinary boundaries. They read Chris Higgins’ book, The Good Life of Teaching: An Ethics of Professional Practice (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). This work draws on virtue ethics to explore how the flourishing of teachers is connected to the well-being of their students and the larger community. The discussions prepared group members for a talk by Higgins at 7 p.m., April 9, in 2008 Richmond Center entitled, “Teaching as Ethical Quest: Pitfalls and Possibilities.” The talk by Higgins -- who is Assistant Professor in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign -- was co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of Ethics in Society.

Group leaders: Sandra Borden, School of Communication; Paul Farber, Department of Teaching, Learning, and Educational Studies; Jil Larson, Department of English.

Rethinking Pedagogy Reading Group
Scholars working in the humanities are sometimes described “humanists.” As teachers their commitment to humanism and the humanities would seem to presuppose a curriculum project directed toward the full and highest development of each student’s natural humane capacities. Yet, powerful critiques of humanism, including Marx, Freud, Althusser, Foucault, and many feminists, post-structuralists, and postmodernists challenge the traditional humanist conception of subjectivity, and thus, perhaps, the fundamental curricular project of the humanities as conventionally construed.

This reading group discussed contemporary curricular theory informed by anti-humanist thought and the implications for curriculum and instruction in different humanities disciplines.

Group Leaders: Allen Webb, Department of English; Kristina Wirtz, Department of Anthropology.

The “Spatial Turn” and the Humanities
The humanities are faced with a major conceptual and methodological reorientation known as the ‘spatial turn.’ This reorientation flows from the recognition that all human action has a spatial dimension, inflecting classical questions about the human condition. Many humanities scholars, while tangentially aware of this development, are unclear about the new theories of spatiality and embodiment, or how to apply them in their fields of analysis. Sparked in part by the philosophical writings of Walter Benjamin and Gaston Bachelard, the spatial turn has gained increased influence in recent years. The group, which includes faculty and graduate student attendees, met numerous times during the semester and tackled Gaston Bachelard’s Poetics of Space, Yi-Fu Tuan’s Space and Space, David Harvey’s Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom and Edward Soja’s Postmodern Geographies, among other readings.

Group Leaders: Sally Hadden, Department of History; LouAnn Wurst, Department of Anthropology; David Dickason, W.E. Upjohn Center.

Human Rights Exploration Roundtable
This group explored human rights theory from economic and social standpoints, as well as from a variety of political viewpoints and across various academic disciplines. The involvement of undergraduates in an endeavor such as this is an important part of their liberal arts education and as a result will strengthen their ability to engage in critical thinking in all of their WMU coursework and assist in preparing them for graduate school and the workplace of the 21st century. The melding of minds from various academic disciplines should, it is hoped, give everyone new perspectives on the importance of human rights in our world and foster further interest in this timely topic.

Group Leaders: Kevin Haynes and Andy Sanford, Department of Philosophy; Blain Auer, Department of Comparative Religion.
**Special Programs**

**Humans for Everybody**

**Community Collaboration**

Sixteen faculty members volunteered to teach humanities courses in the Kalamazoo neighborhoods in a program that included ten participants who have not had the opportunity to attend a university. All ten successfully completed the pilot fifteen-week seminar that met twice a week for two hours of study and discussion. The course included three modules: Tom Bailey, Department of English, taught the literature of Jane Austen; Dini Metro-Roland, Department of Teaching, Learning, and Educational Studies, taught philosophical foundations of education; and Mariam Konate, Gender and Women’s Studies Program, taught African experience in the Americas before the Civil War. Audrey Thompson, a graduate student in the Department of History sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences, and Erin Archerd, a lawyer and community volunteer, facilitated learning and writing. The pilot program was covered by the Kalamazoo Gazette and funded by the Kalamazoo Community Foundation; the WMU Foundation is working to find funding for the future.

The program is a successful model of a distinctive and innovative learning experience that advances our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and community collaboration.

Initiated by Susan Hoffmann, Department of Political Science; Rick Stravers, Executive Director of Open Doors; Matt Lager, Deputy Director of Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Service (KNHS); and Rondell Yarbrough, a graduate of WMU and coordinator at KNHS.

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**Graduate Humanities Conference**

**Engaging Tomorrow’s Scholars**

A hundred people took part in the first annual WMU Graduate Humanities Conference. Twelve dozen graduate students entered papers in the competition, and sixteen papers were selected for presentation in three sessions. Pablo Pastrana, Department of Spanish, gave a keynote address. Moderators for the conference were Blain Auer, Department of Comparative Religion; Joe Reish, University Libraries; and Eve Salsbury, Department of English. The winner of the best paper and a $500 prize was Becky De Oliveira, Department of English, “Harvard Cowboys: The Role of Silas Weir Mitchell’s Creative Works in Defining Western-style American Masculinity”; and the runner-up and winner of a $300 prize was Ben Wright, Medieval Studies, “Cult, Kingdom, and Culture: Cambro’s Miraculous Virgin and the Transformation of a Cultural Contact Zone.” The Graduate College funded the conference, and papers will be published in The Hilltop Review.

The conference provided a distinctive learning experience by noting student success and advancing research initiatives on our campus.

Organized by Jason Aiello, Coordinator, Center for the Humanities.

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**Partnerships**

**Co-Sponsored Events**

**Medical Humanities Conference**

Center for the Study of Ethics in Society; School of Medicine; Medical Humanities Workgroup; Department of Philosophy

Reading: Bonnie Jo Campbell, WMU Distinguished Alumna, 2012

Department of English; Gwen Frostic Speaker Series

“War Letters,” a lecture by Andrew Carroll

Haworth College of Business; Department of English

“How Does a Child Know It is Male or Female,” a lecture by Anne-Fausto Sterling

Department of Anthropology; School of Medicine; Visiting University Scholars Program; College of Health and Human Services

“Empire and Liberty in the Eighteenth-Century North America,” a lecture by Fred Anderson

Department of History; Visiting University Scholars Program

**Gwen Frostic Speaker Series**

Department of English; Environmental Studies Program

**Spanish Lecture Series**

Department of Spanish

**Exhibits**

**Student Posters from “Nature and Society”**

Environmental Studies Program

**Caribbean Dreams**

School of Art

**The Life of Merze Tate**

Sonya Bernard-Hollins; University Libraries

**Programs**

**Professional Development Program with Paul Solomon**

Extended University Programs; College of Fine Arts

**Fulbright in Egypt Binational Scholars Program with Osama Madany, Menoufiya University**

Fulbright Commission; Haenicke Institute
2012-2013 Series
Power and Publics

E.J. Dionne
October 25, 2012

Chris Mooney
November 29, 2012

Harry J. Elam, JR.
January 24, 2012

Jocelyne Cesari
February 19, 2013

Special Thanks

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