2014

2013-14 Annual Report

University Center for the Humanities
University Center for the Humanities

Western Michigan University

Annual Report 2013-14
Building upon a Strong Foundation in the Humanities

The University Center for the Humanities continues to flourish in its fourth 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,’ and 2013-14 ‘Changing Climates.’

The idea for ‘Changing Climates’ came from the Center’s Interdisciplinary Humanities Group on Climate Change, a coalition of faculty and citizens who have been working to change our thinking about the truth of climate science and global consequences of climate change.

What has been refreshingly new about this year’s series is our engagement with the wider community and their support for our speakers and events. When we began in 2010, we had hoped to attract 100 people to our events. In the fall of 2013, we brought Bill McKibben to Miller with an audience of 1100.

Community co-sponsors for McKibben included the Kalamazoo Nature Center, the Kalamazoo People’s Food Co-op, the Kalamazoo Environmental Council, the Sierra Club, and the Wild Ones. Peggy Shepard, the director of WE/ACT for Environmental Justice in Harlem, was also co-sponsored by the Nature Center and the Arcus Center. We partnered with Kalamazoo College to bring in the environmental writer Sandra Steingraber; and with the Kalamazoo Institute of Art to host the sculptor Michele Oka Doner; and with the Haenicke Institute for Global Engagement to sponsor the Fulbright scholar Osama Madany. These free and open events have attracted over 3000 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
Katherine Joslin, founding director
Scott Bade, coordinator

Bethlynn Sanders, administrative assistant
Jason Aiello, graphic designer

Terry Foor, coordinator, Humanities for Everybody
Natalie Kelber, undergraduate intern
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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 a vital academic and community life.

About the Humanities
The humanities provide fundamental intellectual resources for exploring the issues of our day. Rooted in diverse perspectives, the humanities comprise classics, languages, literature, philosophy, ethics, history, religion, archaeology, cultural studies, and the social sciences, such as cultural anthropology, economics, geography, political science, and sociology. They also 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
- More than 3000 attendees at events in our ‘Changing Climates’ series.
- Over 150 disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary events were held at the Center.
- 5 Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups were awarded funding.
- 13 graduates from the Humanities for Everbody (H4E) program
Lecture Series

Michele Oka Doner | September 26, 2013

Cosponsored by: University Center for the Humanities, WMU; Gwen Frostic School of Art, WMU; Haenicke Institute for Global Engagement, WMU; Kalamazoo Nature Center; Kalamazoo People's Food Co-Op; College of Arts and Sciences, WMU; Kalamazoo Institute of Art

Lecture: “The Ocean as Inspiration, the Ocean as Fabricator”

Artist Michele Oka Doner discussed her works of art, her methods of creation, and her inspirations in a dazzling talk and slide show delivered to 150 rapt listeners at the Kalamazoo Institute of Art.

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

Bill McKibben | October 25, 2013

Cosponsored by: University Center for the Humanities, WMU; Kalamazoo Nature Center; Kalamazoo People's Food Co-Op; College of Arts and Sciences, WMU; Environmental Studies Program, WMU; Kalamazoo Public Library; Kalamazoo Environmental Council; Lee Honors College, WMU; Office for Sustainability, WMU; Political Science, WMU; Sierra Club; Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy; Wild Ones.

Lecture: “Notes from the Front Lines of the Climate Fight”

At Miller Auditorium, Bill McKibben delivered a thoughtful and provocative talk to over 1100 attendees from WMU and the wider community. After the talk, hundreds of visitors attended the tabling event on Miller’s 2nd floor.

Organized by Paul Clements, Department of Political Science.
Kenneth Chang | November 21, 2013

Cosponsored by: College of Fine Arts; Center for the Study of Ethics in Society; Departments of Biological Sciences, Chemistry, and Physics; Mallinson Institute for Science Education; Office of the Provost.

Lecture: “News Judgment vs. Opinion: Do I Have an Agenda When I Write about Global Warming?”

One hundred and twenty people from WMU and the Kalamazoo community braved a chilly November evening to attend the lecture delivered by New York Times Columnist Kenneth Chang. Chang discussed his unique and influential role in the ongoing discussion of climate change.

Organized by Kirk Korista, Department of Physics.

Peggy Shepard | February 24, 2014

Cosponsored by: Kalamazoo Nature Center; Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, WMU; Departments of Anthropology, History, Philosophy, Political Science, and Sociology, WMU; Lewis Walker Institute, WMU; Lee Honors College, WMU; Offices of Diversity and Inclusion, the Provost, and Sustainability, WMU.

Lecture: “Advancing Environmental Health and Justice: A Community Perspective”

Over one hundred people defied a fierce winter storm to listen to Peggy Shepard deliver an intimate and inspiring talk about environmental justice. In this lecture full of practical and important advice, Shepard interacted with the audience for over one and half hours, leaving no question without a genuine and thoughtful answer. On the following Friday morning over breakfast, Shepard had a lively discussion with representatives from the Kalamazoo Nature Center, the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, Kalamazoo College, the Kalamazoo River CleanUp Coalition and the Allied Site Task Force.

Organized by Cybelle Shattuck, PhD Candidate, University of Michigan.
Lecture Series

Sandra Steingraber | March 13, 2014

Sponsored by: Kalamazoo College Tourtellotte Lecture Series; Kalamazoo College Biology Department; Kalamazoo Nature Center; and the University Center for the Humanities, WMU. Additional support from WMU Office of Sustainability; Lee Honors College, WMU; the Center for Ethics in Society, WMU; and the Program in Environmental Studies, WMU.

Lecture: “Raising Elijah: Protecting Children in an Age of Environmental Crisis”

At Kalamazoo College’s Dalton Theatre, Steingraber delivered a provocative and inspirational talk on the present (and local) environmental crises and the difficulties we face in protecting our children in the face of these crises. Over two hundred community members and students from Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University attended the lively and informative talk.

Organized by Binney Girdler, Biology Department, Kalamazoo College, and Scott Bade, University Center for the Humanities, WMU.

Osama Madany | May 15, 2014

Cosponsored by: University Center for the Humanities, WMU; Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, WMU; Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Fine Arts, and Health and Human Services, WMU; Departments of Anthropology, History, English, Philosophy, Physics, and Sociology, WMU; Gwen Frostic School of Art, WMU; Haenicke Institute for Global Engagement, WMU; Kalamazoo Nature Center; Kalamazoo People’s Food Co-op; Lewis Walker Institute, WMU; Lee Honors College, WMU; Office of the Provost, WMU; Office of Sustainability, WMU; Program in Environmental Studies, WMU.

Lecture: “‘No Country for Old Men’: Shifting Cultural Borders in Egypt”

In May at the University Center for the Humanities, Fulbright scholar and visiting researcher Osama Madany delivered a powerful talk that examined various manifestations of the current cultural scene in Egypt that are gradually de-centering a politically repressive order.

Organized by Michelle Metro-Roland and the Fulbright Program in the Haenicke Institute for Global Engagement.
The annual Catherine Julien Memorial Lecture in Interdisciplinary Studies continued on February 24, 2014. The mission of the Julien Series is to bring to campus WMU alumni (graduate or undergraduate) whose professional or academic work is broadly interdisciplinary. The campus visit includes a public presentation for the University community, as well as informal events planned by the host department or unit.

John Matthew Smith, Ph.D.

“The Sons of Westwood: John Wooden, UCLA and the Dynasty That Changed College Basketball”

The University Center for Humanities and WMU welcomed alumnus John Matthew Smith (BA, Michigan State University; MA, WMU; PhD, Purdue University). Smith read from and spoke about his book *The Sons of Westwood: John Wooden, UCLA and the Dynasty That Changed College Basketball*, which tells the story of the most significant college basketball program in the country at a pivotal period in American cultural history. The book weaves together a story of sports and politics in an era of social and cultural upheaval, a time when college students and college athletes joined the civil rights movement, demonstrated against the Vietnam War, and rejected the dominant Cold War culture.

Organized by Ann Miles, Professor of Sociology, with the support of WMU Athletics, the Department of History, and the Graduate College.
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 ($1000 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 eligible for $1000, which includes a contribution of $500 from the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Groups

The Study of Climate Change: Working Toward a More Livable Future

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

In 2013-14, the interdisciplinary group on climate change continued interdisciplinary discussions and activities from 2012-13 in three main areas: (1) enhancing WMU students’ understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change, (2) enhancing understanding in the community of the causes and consequences of climate change, and (3) supporting interdisciplinary research and grant-seeking related to climate change. Notable accomplishments included supporting the Center in the development and organization of the ‘Changing Climates’ speaker series that included the visit of Bill McKibben, a leading environmental activist, in October 2013. The group also organized a large series of climate change related events in the community and at the university in the weeks before and after McKibben’s visit. Many of these lectures were well attended not only by students but also by people from the community and from across the university. The group supported the ‘Hope for Creation’ series on climate change organized by the Bronson Park Clergy that was held in March of 2014. The group also organized a series of workshops for educators in underserved groups (faith communities, scouts, and school teachers), funded by the American Chemical Society. The workshops were designed to provide content information coupled with hands-on activities that educators could use in their programing. The Speaker’s Bureau organized by the group was contacted by a number of people in the community and was able to provide speakers for several events. In addition to these accomplishments, the group organized and participated in discussions about other interdisciplinary grants, curriculum development possibilities, and related topics.

These discussions resulted in the development of a course that will be submitted for consideration as a General Education course in Area Five. A prototype of the course will be offered in the Fall of 2014 by the Environmental and Sustainability Studies Program, led by Dr. Denise Keele. The group also began planning for the development of a climate change minor in consultation with Dr. Ed Martini, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.
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.

This year the group began with readings and discussions meant to support the development of an NEH funded course on Human Flourishing and the Pursuit of Happiness, the pilot of which was taught by one of our members, Dini Metro-Roland.

The readings included works of literature, such as Annie Dillard’s For the Time Being, Margaret Atwood’s The Year of the Flood, Marilynne Robinson’s Gilead, and Daniel Haybron’s Happiness, a Very Short Introduction. Members Jil Larson and Paul Farber also participated directly in the course, leading reading group discussions on the novels Gilead and Once Upon a River.

In addition to these readings, the group continued its exploration of what it means to teach in the Humanities. This included reading Mark Edmunson’s Why Teach? and a special issue of Daedalus (Winter 2014) devoted to “What Humanists Do,” edited by Denis Donoghue and featuring a number of scholars who were asked to write about a specific work of inspiration. The group ended the year with a discussion about ways to broaden the campus-wide discussion about the nature and value of teaching in higher education.

Realities vs. the Ideal: A Roundtable for the Study of Lived Religion

Group Leaders: Eric Mendes, Department of Comparative Religion, and Emily Powell, Department of Anthropology

This interdisciplinary group was developed to investigate religion through the lived experience of religion rather than through doctrine, which is the prevalent focus of scholars in religious studies departments. The group brings together 9 masters students every week, 7 in the Comparative Religion Department and 2 in the Anthropology Department. Initially 5 of the students did not have a project of focus, but were writing term papers for courses. The group aided these students in developing long-term projects, and, together with students who came to the group with previous research, all developed projects that are complete enough to participate in a symposium on lived religion to be held at the Humanities Center. Writing samples that 2 of the students developed in this group were used for applications to graduate programs, with both being accepted (1 PhD and 1 second masters) with full funding. The group has also encouraged participants to attend and present at conferences, resulting in 3 students attending the American Anthropology Association (AAA) Conference in 2013, 5 students participating in and 1 student winning the WMU Humanities Graduate Conference Paper Competition, 3 students presenting at the Michigan Academy of Arts Annual Conference, and all 9 students participating in the WMU Graduate Pecha Kucha competition. 6 of the students’ projects will also be formed into a panel on the study of lived religion that will be presented at the AAA annual conference in December 2014.
Digital Humanities Interdisciplinary Group

*Group Leaders: Kate Langan, University Libraries; Ilse Schweitzer, Department of English*

The goal of the Digital Humanities Group was to initiate a conversation at WMU to identify a need for and foster support for a digital humanities (dh) initiative on campus. The group invited members from the community to participate in all discussions and invited specialists from various departments and units to lead the discussion. There were roughly 20-30 participants throughout the semester. Details can be found on the following page: libguides.wmich.edu/dighumworkgroup. Funding was used to provide refreshments for participants since it was held during the dinner hour. During the Spring semester, we met twice a month and the group created a THATCamp (The Humanities and Technology Camp) which occurred during the WMU Medieval Congress. Additionally, the group began developing work flow documents for dh projects, and a dh graduate course for 2015.

Interdisciplinary Group on Language and Education

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

The Interdisciplinary group on Language and Education continued to explore and address issues of second language acquisition, linguistic and pedagogical theory, the experience and preparation of faculty and teachers (university and public school), and working with non-English speaking students. Highlights from the meetings included discussions of ACTFL’s Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI): An Overview of the OPI, the OP.ic, and Strategies for Student Success, “Language Education and the Common Core State Standards”; Allen Webb reading from his book *Teaching to Exceed* (Routledge, 2012); a reading of *The Multilingual Turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL, and Bilingual Education*, edited by Stephen May (Routledge, 2014); a discussion of Teaching Language with Technology, and the reading of “Language Games: How Gaming Communities Shape Second-Language Literacy.” The group co-sponsored the talk “Teaching Foreign Languages in Spain: Approaches and Methodologies” by visiting Professor Montse Casanovas from the University of LLeida, Spain; the discussion “Toward an ELL Teacher Endorsement Program” at WMU by Selena Protacio; and Teaching ELL Students at the WMU panel presentation cosponsored by the English Department.
Graduate Humanities Conference
Engaging Tomorrow’s Scholars

Fifty people took part in the 3rd annual WMU Graduate Humanities Conference. Fourteen papers were selected for presentation in three sessions. Paul Clements, Department of Political Science, gave the keynote address. Moderators for the conference were Lynne Heasley, Department of History and Environmental Studies Program; Alisa Perkins, Department of Comparative Religion; and Brian C. Wilson, Department of Comparative Religion. The first place prize ($500) for best conference paper was awarded to Kyle Byron (Comparative Religion) for his paper “Free Zone Scientology: The Social Structure of a Contemporary Reform Movement.” The runner-up prize ($300) went to Eric Denby (History) for his paper “From ‘Black is Beautiful’ to ‘Gay is Good’: Cultural Frames in the Gay Liberation Movement.” The Graduate Student Activities Committee and 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 Scott Bade, the Coordinator of the Center for the Humanities, and Eric Mendes, Department of Comparative Religion.
Special Programs

Humanities for Everybody
Community Collaboration

For a third year, Western Michigan University's Center for the Humanities, Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services, and Open Doors Kalamazoo collaborated to provide free access to college level humanities courses for adult learners through the Humanities for Everybody (“H4E”) Program. Thirteen participants joined our community of learners this year and successfully completed one or more modules during the 10-week Fall 2013 session or the 10-week Spring 2014 session.

The 2013-2014 course modules included: 1) “Michigan Writers” led by Dr. Thomas Bailey, WMU English professor emeritus. Dr. Bailey returned to teach for a third year and was acknowledged with an Outstanding Service Award for his longstanding commitment to sharing his love of literature with H4E participants; 2) “Paradise Lost” led by Dr. Elizabeth Bradburn, Department of English; 3) “Human Flourishing and the Pursuit of Happiness” led by Dr. Dini Metro-Roland, Department of History; and 4) “The African-American Great Migration, 1915-1970” led by Dr. Mitch Kachun, Department of History.

Funding for the program was provided by the John E. Fetzer Fund of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. John Terry Foor, a graduate student in the Department of Political Science was sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences to provide program support as its Program Manager. Through the assignment of Center Board Member and former H4E instructor, Dr. Kathy Purnell, to serve as Program Advisor, and the recruitment of a WMU alumnus of the Haworth College of Business, Rondel Yarbrough, to serve as the H4E Engagement Specialist, new outreach projects were undertaken with Kalamazoo Adult Education, the Mothers of Hope, and the Public Media Network to increase public awareness of the program. Dr. Bradburn joined a group of community volunteers from the Kalamazoo Black Arts Festival (Dr. Sidney Ellis), Open Doors (Rick Stravers), the Center’s Board (Drs. Mary Louise Totton and Joe Reish), WMU’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (Tierra Marshall and William Craft) and the Lewis Walker Institute (Tanya Bellamy), to render Milton’s Paradise Lost accessible to a contemporary audience through an outreach video broadcast on Public Media Network.

In its third year of operation, Humanities for Everybody has started to track the progress of students. It is clear that the program’s informal and community-oriented structure has launched graduates into community leadership positions and inspired them to pursue higher education. Former program participants have attended Kalamazoo Valley Community College and have committed themselves to pursue studies at Western Michigan University. One former student who was featured in the Kalamazoo Gazette upon her appointment to the Kalamazoo Public School Board described the Humanities for Everybody Program as “the best thing for me,” as it eliminated financial barriers and enabled her to sample a diverse set of short courses in an intellectually stimulating and supportive setting (Mlive, April 11, 2014).

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.
Partnerships

Cosponsored Events

*Kalamazoo Poetry Festival*
Traci Brimhall Reading, Friday April 4, 2014 at Kalamazoo Public Library

*Lee Honors College’s 2013 Lyceum Lecture Series*
Organized by Carla Koretsky, Lee Honors College, WMU

*Catherine Julien Memorial Lecture*
Organized by Ann Miles, Professor of Sociology, with the support of WMU Athletics, the Department of History, and the Graduate College.

John Matthew Smith, Ph.D.
WMU alumnus and author of
*The Sons of Westwood: John Wooden, UCLA and the Dynasty That Changed College Basketball*

Feb. 24, 2014
4 p.m.
2028 Brown Hall

The Sons of Westwood will make a stop at the university for the college's annual lecture series. The event is part of the 50th anniversary celebration of the Rollin Cordell Department of Athletics.
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2014-15 Series – ‘The Healing Arts’

Next year’s theme, ‘The Healing Arts,’ celebrates the opening the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine. Keynote speaker Yann Martel’s novel Life of Pi has been selected as the WMU Common Read for 2014; freshman students will read and study the novel and have the opportunity to hear him speak in Miller on October 23. The Kalamazoo Public Library and the Portage Public Library are co-sponsors of the Martel event and are working with their patrons on a wide variety of community activities.

October 23, 2014, 7:00 p.m. | Yann Martel | Miller Auditorium, WMU
November 6, 2014, 7:30 p.m. | Michael Pollan | Miller Auditorium, WMU
January 29, 2015, 7:00 p.m. | Nellie Hermann | Dalton Auditorium, WMU
March 19, 2015, 7:00 p.m. | Ed Roth | Dalton Auditorium, WMU
April 2, 2015, 7:00 p.m. | Arthur Kleinman | Shaw Theatre, WMU
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