



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
University Center
for the Humanities



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Higher Education
for the Justice-Involved

2025 Annual Report



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
University Center
for the Humanities



Our Impact

86

Students Directly Involved

19

Community Partners Engaged

46

Events

5

Faculty Publications Supported

8

0

0



People
Engaged



Spring 2025

2024-25 Mini-Grants, four projects for a combined total of nearly \$10,000!

“Kalamazoo Settler Cemetery” by Dr. Evan Kutzler in History

“Experiences of Women Refugees: A Community Conversation and Photovoice Exhibit” by Dr. Shannon McMorrow in the School of Interdisciplinary Health Programs

“Life-worlds Along the Kalamazoo River: A Public Humanities Project Addressing Environmental Change in a Time of Crisis” by Dr. Kristina Wirtz in Spanish

“Pawsitive Campus Connections: A Therapy Dog Certification Course Scholarship Program” by Dr. Angie Moe in Sociology



Dr. McMorrow's Experiences of Women Refugees event March 2025



Dr. McMorrow's Experiences of Women Refugees event March 2025

Spring 2025 Speaker Series Events

Our 2024-25 speaker series: Community Conversations was a resounding success. Dr. Sultana and Mark Crain gave meaningful presentations that crossed both practical and theoretical engagement with humanistic endeavors.

The University Center for the Humanities 2024-25
Speaker Series: *Community Conversations*
presents

Mark Crain, Executive Director, Dream of Detroit:
Housing Justice in Detroit

Mark Crain will discuss DREAM's Muslim-led neighborhood revitalization work on Detroit's west side. From a decade at the helm of this non-profit organization, Crain will explore DREAM's innovative approach to housing development, economic development, community organizing, and re-entry for formerly incarcerated citizens. Countering Detroit's trend toward gentrification, Crain will outline how DREAM centers its neighbors as leaders in the area's transformation, and will discuss DREAM's vision for Detroit as a city anchored in its sustainable neighborhoods; a city where homeownership, small business development, cooperative economics, local food sourcing, and access to education and the arts are priorities of every neighborhood; a city where neighborliness is a shared value.



Please Join us on April 10th at 7pm in WMU's Multicultural Center (Trimpe 1021).

No registration required. This event is free and open to the public.

Free parking outside of the Adrian Trimpe Building.

The University Center for the Humanities 2024
Speaker Series: *Community Conversations*
presents

Dr. Farhana Sultana, Professor, Geography and the Environment
Department, Syracuse University:
**Collaborative Learning to Confront Climate Coloniality and
Decolonize Global Futures**



Amidst growing ecological crises and climate-influenced worsening disasters and escalating insecurities globally, the need to confront systems that perpetuate and exacerbate impacts appears to be a unanimous global desire. Yet that is not necessarily the case. Climate coloniality disrupts simplistic narratives of climate justice or the understanding of what just global futures could be. Climate Coloniality reproduces the hauntings of colonialism and imperialism, thereby complicating climate politics at global and local scales. This requires decolonizing both epistemic violences and material outcomes for meaningful climate justice. Collaborative learning and education focused on community-based praxis and ethics of care offer possibilities for building more secure and just futures.

Please Join us on Mar. 13th at 7pm in WMU's Multicultural Center (Trimpe 1021).

No registration required. This event is free and open to the public.

Free parking outside of the Adrian Trimpe Building.



Spring 2025

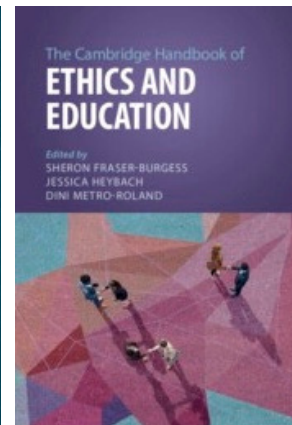
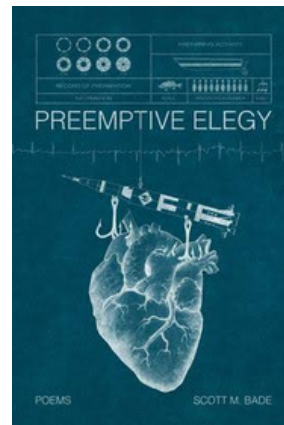
Spring 2025 Books and Beer

Evan Kutzler, History, *From Biscuits to Lane Cake*
-January 16th 2025

Maria Fava, Gilmore School of Music, *Art, Music, Activism* -
February 13th 2025

Dini Metro-Roland, TLES, Jessica Heybach, Associate Dean
of Research and Graduate Studies, *Ethics and Education* -
March 20th 2025

Scott Bade, Kalamazoo Poet and WMU Alum, *Preemptive
Elegy* - April 17th 2025

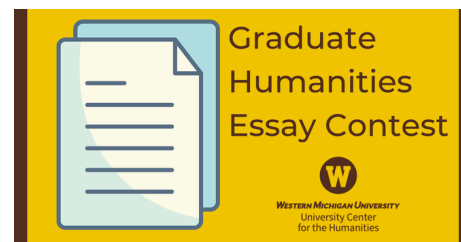


Graduate Humanities Essay Contest

Each year, the Center receives essay submissions from our graduate scholars and awards prizes to two submissions totaling \$1600.

First-Place (\$1000): Sophia Kahn, "Colonial Steampunk: A Manifesto Paper"

Runner-up (\$600): Ellyn Ruhlmann, "Rabbie Burns and Bob Dylan: The Rhetoric of Romance and Rebellion Paper"



Interdisciplinary Humanities Groups

The center is proud to support groups on campus that focus on bringing together scholars from various disciplines. We are particularly excited to support the continuing work of the Climate Change Working Group and the Higher Education for the Justice-Involved Working Group. Both of these groups have been running for multiple years and are proud recipients of NEH Grants.





Fall 2025

2025-26 Faculty Mini-Grants:

Our fourth cycle of Faculty Mini-Grants continues to show the incredible promise and commitment that Western faculty have for public humanities. This year's grant recipients are:

Engaging Students in the Democratic Process: Building a Behavioral Community Psychology Course – Traci Cihon, Psychology

A development plan for a Behavioral Community Psychology course to engage students in democratic participation through public policy advocacy.

Paws for Healing: Examining the Impact of Therapy Dogs in Youth-Based Mental Health, Speech, and Occupational Therapy – Angela Moe, Sociology

Researching the impact of student engagement with therapy dogs.

Water and the Environmental Humanities: Community-Building Through Ways of Knowing and Learning the Kalamazoo River – Lynne Heasley, Environment, Geography, and Sustainability, and Kristina Wirtz, Spanish.

A plan to develop community events that build on an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary working group focused on the Kalamazoo River that gathered in Douglas, Michigan, June 26, 2025

Mapping the History of Moviegoing through Kalamazoo – Vincent Longo, Communication

A project seeking to create a publicly accessible digital repository of the history behind movie-going in Kalamazoo.

Homecoming Stories: Dignity, Connection, and the Lives of Returning Citizens – Alisa Perkins, World Religions and Cultures

Utilizing public humanities methods and digital tools to connect students, community organizers, scholars, and formerly incarcerated citizens to create a better understanding of dignity and justice after prison.



2025-26 Grant Recipient
Kristina Wirtz, Spanish



2025-26 Grant Recipient
Vincent Longo, Communication



Upcoming Events

2025-26 Books and Beer

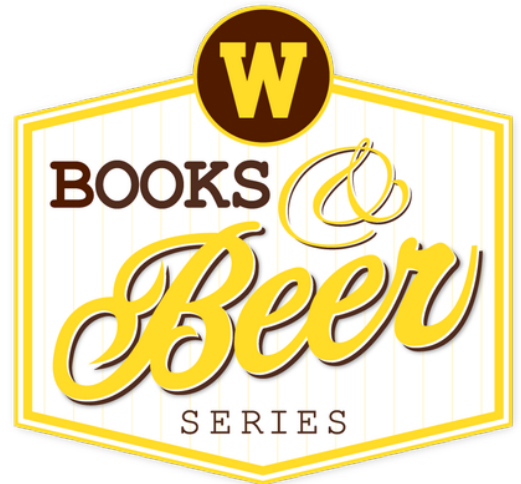
Ron Kramer, Sociology, *Apocalyptic Crimes: Why Nuclear Weapons Are Illegal and Must Be Abolished* - October 23rd 2025 (Event Already Happened)

Jeffrey Angles, Department of World Languages and Literatures, *Translation of The Luminous Fairies and Mothra* - January 22nd 2026

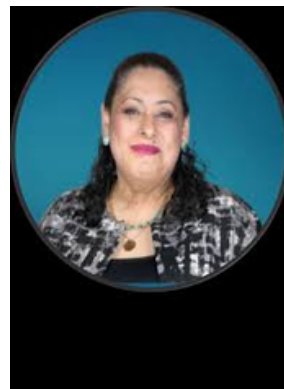
Jesse Smith, Sociology, *Goodbye Religion: The Causes and Consequences of Secularization* - February 19th 2026

Sally Hadden, History, *Collection of Colonial Legal Records* - March 19th 2026

Anise Strong, History, *Classical Receptions and Impact of Xena: Warrior Princess* - April 9th 2026



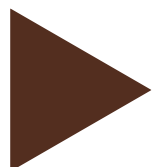
Imagining Home Event



Join us on February 10th (5:30 pm) for a campus and community gathering we are calling "Imagining Home". This event will include student art, music and poetry and campus and community speakers including WMU President Russ Kavalhuna, Edison Resident Scholar Raymond Gant, community activist Maria Zavala-Paredes, and author and Assistant Professor Shonda Buchanan reflecting on the meaning of home.



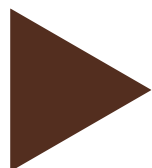
2026 Speaker Series



Susana Monsó

*Associate Professor, Department of Logic, History,
and Philosophy of Science, UNED
-March 20th, 12pm EST.*

Digital Talk



Ross Gay

*Professor, English Department, Indiana
University
-April 16th*

*Craft talk at KVCC, workshop at WMU for Grad
Students in English, evening presentation*



We are excited to bring another excellent lineup to the **2025-2026** University Center for Humanities Speaker Series!

Details for each speaker are available at:

wmich.edu/humanities



Higher Education for the Justice-Involved

HEJI students continued to excel through their academic journeys in 2025, with some members of the inaugural cohort finishing their sixtieth credit(!) officially marking the halfway point. HEJI currently has 36 students pursuing their B.A., and we are actively recruiting for our third cohort, which will begin in Fall 2026.

On top of a \$210,000 continuation of our state contract, HEJI began work on a \$200,000 grant from the Michigan department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential that began in January of 2025 and facilitated the hiring of a Student Success Coordinator, which brought HEJI to 2.5 full-time employees. This grant also provides necessary funds for professional development which has supported HEJI's participation in two national cohorts: one with the Tennessee Higher Education Initiative, [Navigating Forward](#), and the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison's [2025 Cohort](#).

As it did last year, the HEJI Working Group continued to support HEJI's development and facilitate the program's ability to incorporate student support services at WMU-Coldwater. Consisting of 30+ members, the group comprises deans, directors, department chairs, faculty members, graduate students, advisors, and staff members from across the University.

In 2025, HEJI worked hard to continue solidifying its foundation. Based on our success doing that, it is hard to not be excited about the future of the program.

If you are interested in learning more about the HEJI, the HEJI Working Group, teaching in prison, or how you might support this initiative, please find more information at our page by scanning the QR code to the right, by visiting wmich.edu/heji, or by emailing heji@wmich.edu



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Mural in WMU-Coldwater Classroom

