

*So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.*

Robert Frost

English Department Capstone Conference



ENG 495 *Capstone Conference*

6 December 2019

Kirkhof Center

Grand Valley State University

Allendale, Michigan

Fall Semester 2019

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Why a Capstone Conference?

The English Capstone provides several important opportunities for English majors not offered elsewhere in the curriculum: the opportunity to reflect individually on the intellectual impact of majoring in English (intellectual autobiography); the opportunity to engage in the development and writing of an extended paper (senior thesis); and the opportunity to participate in the public presentation of the thesis work (departmental student conference).

Our Capstone course underscores the department's principles and values: to cultivate critical reading and reflection; to produce excellent writing in a variety of forms; to speak, read, and write effectively; and to achieve literary, analytical, pedagogical, and theoretical skills.

This conference is the culminating event for the English Capstone course. It requires that students publicly present a project for which they have been responsible from its inception to its final form. The presentation makes concrete the expertise that students have accrued in the research process and allows them to speak as authorities on their topic. No matter what career our students enter, public speaking is an essential skill, as is the act of distilling complex knowledge into a compact yet comprehensible package. Thus, this final assignment for the Capstone course is the one that perhaps most clearly transitions students out of the major and into the next phase of their lives. We see this element of the course as a way to help students recognize each others' accomplishments—and to help them be proud of their own as they move forward into their various futures.

Schedule

Session One: 9-9:50 a.m.

Panels A & B

Session Two: 10-10:50 a.m.

Panels C, D & E

Session Three: 11-11:50 a.m.

Panels F, G & H

Session Four: 12-12:50 p.m.

Panels I, J & K

Session Five: 1-1:50 p.m.

Panels L, M & N

Session Six: 2-2:50 p.m.

Panels O & P

Notes

Students will present in the order in which they appear in this program; a question-and-answer session will follow once all students on the panel have presented their papers.

Should you have questions, issues or concerns during today's program, please contact faculty in KC 2264.

Refreshments are available to all presenters and their guests, located on tables at the end of the hallway by KC 2270.

Panel A
KC 2259**The Value of Grief and Loss in Literary Representation**

Facilitators: Dr. Pat Bloem &
Dr. Michael Webster

Hannah Weinrick**'Loss and the Development of Identity in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*'**

After reading J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series for the first time at 20, I knew these books would be part of my life forever. While reading, I continually saw loss on nearly every page and wondered why so much trauma was present. From a psychoanalytic perspective, I explore the profound effect that the loss of friends, family, and others have on Harry and the role of unconscious experiences, including repression, denial, guilt, and displacement, in his life. As people are taken from Harry throughout the series, he seems to be losing parts of himself. However, each of those losses brings to the forefront a part of him that failed to exist before. Who Harry becomes is the result of all that he has lost, suggesting that loss in these novels is not something that takes away from us, but something that allows us to grow.

Alaina Wierenga
'Childhood Grief and the Value of Anthropomorphic Literature'

How does an adult help a child who has experienced a significant loss? When a child loses someone they love, adults often feel helpless. One beneficial way to help children through grief is bibliotherapy, the use of books as a therapeutic tool. Grief books which present animal characters with human qualities are especially beneficial, providing a unique emotional distance that books with human characters cannot offer. Anthropomorphism, better defined, is the attribution of human characteristics onto the nonhuman, meaning that a character acts, thinks, and behaves as a human would, but retains the form of animals, cars, trees, and so on. My paper focuses primarily on children's picture books aimed at elementary-aged children who are grieving a death or major loss, such as divorce or moving. I argue that anthropomorphic grief literature has great benefits for suffering children and suggest how adults can use it to help a grieving child.

**Alexandra
Featherston**
**'A Necessary End to
Innocence: Teaching
the Literature of
Death and Dying in
the Elementary
Classroom'**

While the concept of death is something that everyone will face in their lifetime, the number of recent violent, deadly acts is rising. Contrastingly, the amount of literature available for children to prepare, process and cope with these types of tragedies is decreasing. Many school districts have banned books that include violence and death to preserve innocence. However, this type of literature could be used as a preventative method to limit child vulnerability when faced with tragedy. Through the writings and scholarly research of many authors including Sally Paul, Marian Carter, Charles Corr and David Balk, this thesis explores the importance of teaching literature surrounding death and dying to children and students. Focusing on literature that represents the death of children, I will analyze why these books are banned as well as how such books could actually prove valuable in classroom use.

**Panel B
KC 2266**

**Emphasizing the 'Cultural' in
Multicultural Literature**

Facilitators: Dr. Lindsay Ellis &
Dr. Dawn Evans

Emily Gibson
**'Multicultural
Literature:
Inconsistencies
within Definitions'**

Children must receive a quality education, specifically quality reading instruction. The educational system in America has decided the way to ensure proper reading instruction is through the incorporation of multicultural literature within a school's current curriculum. Since the 1970s, this way of thinking has been implemented sporadically. This type of pedagogy has been deemed useful and important in the education community, and copious amounts of research have been generated surrounding this issue. The downfall of multicultural literature can be identified in its foundation: the definition of multicultural literature. This paper will identify the numerous ways multicultural literature is defined and educationally implemented. I will argue that this inconsistency in definition and instruction has been a key factor in the underwhelming success of this type of programming so common throughout the country.

Melissa Schmitz

**‘The Need for
Authentic
International
Literature’**

Multicultural literature, when written from a Western perspective, often lacks cultural authenticity. Western authors, though with good intentions, in some instances seem more invested in advancing their own storyline rather than representing a culture authentically. Asian Americans have been misrepresented in multicultural literature, which has led to a lack of empathy for their culture and values. By examining sample texts, such as *Tikki Tikki Tembo* and *Cookie Fortunes*, I argue that what I know about cultures is often not shown, and authors frequently reinforce negative stereotypes. I argue that international literature written from an inside perspective, by nationals of that particular ethnicity, do a better job of representing their own culture than the books that we often use for cultural exploration. International literature has the power to correct negative stereotypes and create empathy for others through its authentic rich cultural details, illustrations, language and relationships.

Robing Tran

**‘Understanding Life
Journeys through
Reyna Grande’s
Memoir’**

In *The Distance Between Us*, Reyna Grande writes about the experiences she struggled with as a young Mexican girl. Writing her memoir allowed Grande to have a direction and a sense of identity to her new life in America. The lack of affection her parents had given her impacted Grande by making it become difficult to create relationships with other people. The memoir helped Grande finally understand her parents and her culture. It was a way to forgive them. By reading and understanding the life journeys Reyna Grande had experienced throughout her life, we are able to have knowledge about her culture through her memoir.

10 a.m.

SESSION TWO

Panel C
KC 2259

Embracing the Margins in Classroom Literature

Facilitators: Dr. Brian Deyo &
Dr. Amy Masko

Emelia Frederick
‘Disregarding Diversity
in Classroom
Literature: How We
Fail Our Students’

Teachers in the United States are ultimately not meeting the needs of their students. It goes without saying that the classroom should be a place where all students feel comfortable and represented. One of the best ways to achieve this is through the use of multicultural and diverse literature. However, recent studies reveal that even though the student population continues to become increasingly diverse, the literature that is represented within the classroom is not. Firsthand accounts, studies, research, statistics, and interviews have proven that this underrepresentation of diversity in children’s literature has a hazardous effect on students. The purpose of this study is to first demonstrate that there is indeed a lack of diverse literature in schools. Second, this study will discover the crucial component that diverse literature plays in the classroom, expounding upon the negative effect that its absence is having on students.

Gerardo Garcia
‘Negative Effects of
Immigration on the
Family in Young Adult
Literature’

My thesis discusses the effects that immigration has on the dynamics of American immigrant families in young adult fiction. The texts I analyze are *A Step From Heaven*, by An Na, and *The Poet X*, by Elizabeth Acevedo, with families from South Korea and the Dominican Republic, respectively. However, I analyze the universality of the immigration experience’s effects on the family. Despite the texts being about families from different countries and cultures, I discovered that there are numerous similarities in the experiences written about. Within these books are shared issues such as trying to live up to expectations and cultural differences between family members. These issues lead to negative relationships between the parents and the children, which can be demonstrated through the expressed and inferred behavior of the characters in the texts.

Emma Pratt
**‘Developing
Empathy through
Multiperspectivity
in Young Adult
Literature’**

Implementing the perspective of multiple narrators within a young adult novel has numerous benefits for readers. In R. J. Palacio’s *Wonder*, experiencing events from different angles helps readers understand power dynamics, bullying, forgiveness, and other issues more effectively due to empathy the reader gains for certain characters while reading from their perspective. Multivoice novels compel readers to change their way of thinking and promote building empathy toward antagonists. Understanding what the antagonist is going through helps readers interact with the situation, pushing the boundaries of literature by encouraging readers to make connections between themselves and the text. It is in this connection that the meaning of the text is created, and this meaning is unique for every reader based on their experiences. Individuals perceive events differently, and making this discovery firsthand while reading multivoice novels will show readers each character’s version of reality, demonstrating that those realities may be different.

Panel D
KC 2266

**Challenging Patriarchal Boundaries in
Canonical Literature**

Facilitators: Dr. Regis Fox &
Dr. Ashley Shannon

Lauren Smith
**‘Twisted Sisters:
Relationships of
Regan and Goneril in
King Lear’**

My thesis is an exploration of tyrannical women in William Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. My focus is centered around the two eldest daughters, Goneril and Regan. Their behavior is shaped by their lust for power. I examine their relationships with each other, their father, their husbands and with Cordelia. A central piece of this dynamic is Shakespeare’s portrayal of strong-willed and powerful women. Goneril and Regan exemplify powerful and even tyrannical women.

Tara Riddell
**‘Damsel in Distress
or Damsel Causes
Distress?’**

Consistently in our society we have seen many issues involving the rights and privileges that women are excluded from. Through meticulously studying the role of women and how they are treated in *The Great Gatsby* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, I traced the basis of the treatment and reference to women in their storylines. I compare these two stories as well as draw a connection to the way women are treated and referred to in today’s modern world. Through an

understanding of women being used as motives, emotional support, their role and racial impact in our society, and what our perception is through societal conditioning of what their role actually should be, I find a consistent parallel through these two mediums and the world we live in now.

Natalie Avery
**‘The Future is
Female: Using *The
Awakening* and
Becoming to
Understand
Patriarchal Societies’**

Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* and Michelle Obama’s *Becoming* present the idea of feminism in an entirely new light. This thesis explores these works created over the past 150 years and how these powerful female figures living in very male-dominated communities challenge the limited roles that society confines them to in this patriarchal setting. Using *The Awakening* and *Becoming* as a lens looking into this type of environment validates the idea that strong, independent women exist who will go against societies normalities to create their own life separate from what is expected of them. This thesis also compares these texts and the many barriers and boundaries these female authors overcame using their writing from different time periods, racial backgrounds, genres and even the format their stories are written.

Panel E
KC 2270

**Innovative Pathways to Working with
Disabled Students**

Facilitators: Dr. Pat Bloem &
Dr. Michael Webster

Nikole Herrmann
**‘Dyslexia Through a
Different Lens’**

In many studies on the analysis of dyslexia, there has been ongoing confusion as to what causes the learning disability. My thesis aims to prove and define how it affects individual students’ learning in a traditional classroom. While it is necessary for studies to be recorded, it is within our schools’ power to make the changes necessary for each individual student and classroom. Through the examination of different studies I assert that there are many different ways students can struggle from dyslexia. Specific types aren’t predetermined but rather are a development over time that we learn through observation. This is critical for understanding which kinds of strategies are driven to positive results, as well as form a basis for future critical analysis of dyslexia and its effects in classrooms of multiple types.

Braxton Kratt
‘Proven Reading
Methods of
Bibliotherapy with
Cognitively and
Emotionally Impaired
Early Education
Students’

Bibliotherapy is a reading strategy that uses children’s literature to explore feelings and conditions and provide the ability to learn through characters in a story. Using a guided lesson plan, students will read or have a book read to them that involves a similar condition that the child is going through or may potentially go through. Using guided conversations and questions, the student can see themselves in the characters that they are reading and learn based on the actions of the character. For example, the story *Taking Down Syndrome to School* by Jenna Glatzer is told from the perspective of a young student with Down Syndrome named Nick. This story teaches empathy and understanding to all students and makes students with disabilities feel noticed, appreciated, and accepted. This is one of many beneficial uses of bibliotherapy in the classroom.

Alyssa Rainey
‘Bibliotherapy:
Helping the
Vulnerable Youth
with Anxiety’

Mental illness among adolescents has increased at an alarming rate over the past two decades. Due to the stigmas surrounding mental health, many parents can be reluctant to seek help for their children. Anxiety, a common form of mental illness, is something that many people struggle with every day yet avoid talking about. In most cases, anxiety develops at a young age. Bibliotherapy, which harnesses the meditative power of books, can teach coping mechanisms to students with anxiety. When books that target the needs of the student are chosen, the students are able to resonate with their reading and better understand the feelings and thoughts that they are having. When effectively utilized in the classroom, teachers can provide therapeutic strategies for students with anxiety and other mental illnesses.

Panel F
KC 2259**Tracing Themes in Contemporary Literature**

Facilitators: Dr. Brian Deyo &
Dr. Regis Fox

Elora Kline
**‘Eat Your Heart Out:
A Look into Food
in Fiction’**

Eating, as a fundamental need for life, is perhaps the most relatable characteristic shared between people. But while the consumption of food is necessary, food practices and the symbolic meaning of food has far surpassed a simple biological need and has infiltrated every meaningful part of our lives, including literature. The study of food in written text has expanded rapidly over recent years and has begun to delve into the ways in which food literature is significant for both the analysis of a character as well as the culture from which the literature came. The history and evolution of food norms contribute to constructing identity through what we choose to eat or write about. By analyzing fictional texts such as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and other food-embedded literature, the multiple usages of food are analyzed in relation to the overall cultural, gender, and sexual identities of both individuals and societies.

Aleigha Kely
**‘Male Characters and
Mental Health:
Tracking Psychology
through Literature’**

Literature reflects the experiences of the collective, as well as those of the individual. It helps us understand our own coping mechanisms and patterns of behavior. Over time, our knowledge and attitudes towards mental health have evolved to incorporate our ideas as a society about what it looks like to live with mental illnesses. This thesis discusses *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger and *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt in order to unpack the characterizations of mental health as depicted in the male characters of these novels. These works, written six decades apart, are analyzed through the lens of the psychological data of their respective eras, exploring the ways in which our ideas about mental health have evolved over time and how they are reflected in the literature.

Cameron Hysell
**‘Menacing Roles:
How Horror
Antagonists
Emphasize
Masculinized Traits
When Eliciting Terror
and Why Writers
Chose to Use
Those Traits’**

Today’s society loves to be scared. From horror movies to novels, there is no shortage of mediums, tales, and settings that have not left us looking over our shoulders in the night. That rush of endorphins entering the blood as you watch someone being chased by a killer cannot be matched. With that being said, there is a noticeable divide in the characters and traits that are portrayed in horror that champion traits that western society deem as masculine. Masochism, egotism, control and calculation, and even ambition are all characteristics of a good slasher or monster, but why? This thesis studies the reasons why society has grown accustomed to using masculine traits in horror by examining folklore, novels, and movies to analyze why viewers favor these characteristics. Additionally, this thesis reviews the consequences these portrayals have on communities and individuals that watch them.

Panel G
KC 2266

Language and Culture Considerations

Facilitators: Dr. Karen Pezzetti &
Dr. Brian White

Frances Wrighthouse
**‘Monolingual
Setback: The
Opposition Against
Language Immersion
Programs within the
United States
School System’**

Our nation has always been a country of unmistakable diversity in regards to the cultural composition of our citizens, and since the early 20th century this diversity has only increased. Why does a vast majority of our population remain monolingual, and how is our English speaking youth being affected by the lack of language immersion programs? There are people who support the assimilation of the well-established minority groups existing within our society, and their main concerns include the desire to provide citizens with a common language and the fear of not being able to define what is and what is not American. These fears contribute to the lack of immersion programs within our school system. Throughout this thesis I expand upon the opposition in regards to immersion programs for our English-speaking youth and how the lack of these programs within our schools impacts and shapes our society.

Macayla Huisman
**“‘It Was Just a Joke’:
How Accent Racism
in TV Shows Affects
Everyday Discourse’**

Over the past sixty years, the television genre of Sitcom has become a platform of humor for many Americans. While many would argue Sitcoms tackle a myriad of social issues within our world today, the jokes commonly used within Sitcoms typically come at the expense of a diverse number of characters. One such joke comes in the form of mimicking accents of foreigners and finding humor in making fun of the way “accented” English sounds. While funny, this form of racism flies under the radar and conditions the brain to think negatively about accents different from our own. Through an analysis of the character of Raj Koothrappali from the highly-acclaimed TV show *The Big Bang Theory*, I argue how accent racism affects the way “unaccented” English speakers speak to and make assumptions about “accented” English speakers through everyday discourse.

Sarah Belanger
**‘Culturally-Sensitive
Emoji Semiotics’**

In the arising emoji semiotic studies, there are conflicting views on the ambiguous nature of emojis and the concepts they represent. Many cultures and communities interpret concepts differently, so it is nearly impossible to assign a specific image to a broader concept and expect all cultures to accept it as truth. Images simplify a concept and often ignore critical cultural nuances; one community may find another community’s interpretation of a concept insulting or confusing. Visual languages contain a combination of connotative and denotative representations that often allow for the uncertainty of meaning. Not only does this confusion happen on such a large scale, but also it occurs intrinsically. Thus, it is essential to understand how emoji semiotics are developed and understood internally and cross-culturally because the language is continuously evolving, and those left unaware are as well left behind.

Panel H
KC 2270

Rachel O'Hearn
'Low Reading Scores
Do Not Have to Lead
to Academic Failure'

Attending to Classroom Issues

Facilitators: Dr. Amy Masko &
Dr. Avis Hewitt

Low reading-comprehension scores makes up a vast majority of studies conducted on academic failure. This significantly connects the issues of poor social emotional health of students at the elementary level with the cause of low reading comprehension scores, and thus academic failure. Understanding how both reading comprehension scores and social emotional health of elementary students fit in the framework of education is critical. It is important to analyze both areas in order to better assist students in increasing academic success. A student's home life can be the cause of low reading comprehension, academic failure, and poor social emotional skills. Therefore, my thesis examines the reading scores and social emotional skills of students in multiple socioeconomic statuses as well as diagnoses learning disabilities and other factors. This thesis demonstrates that poor social emotional health leads to difficulty in reading and reading comprehension.

Emily Gilbert
'Creating a
Pinterest-Worthy
Literacy Classroom'

Since the invention of Pinterest, teachers have been inspired to create a classroom worthy of a pin by using bright color schemes, the perfect desk arrangement and anchor charts plastered all over the walls—all in trying to create a classroom that is engaging for students. Pinterest can be a great resource for teachers looking for inspiration. But what helps our students learn best? With the 3rd grade reading law being passed, teachers are pressed to produce adequate student scores. That anchor chart, poster, decoration or classroom library might be cute, but is it helping students learn to read, write and spell? As a teacher, it is important to understand where to draw the line between being cute and being efficient for learning purposes. This study will analyze on the environment and spaces that promote student literacy learning.

Anne McElwee
'Mindfulness
Practices and How
They Can Help to
Alleviate the Teacher
Drop-out Crisis'

The Great Recession of 2008 left America's public school system underfunded and American teachers unemployed. Revenues were returned to these schools years after the recession; however, teacher populations continued to plummet. Now, in 2019, nearly fifty percent of all new teachers leave the profession altogether within their first five years on the job. Low wages, little support, and poor working environments leave educators destitute and stressed. An array of solutions has been implemented or proposed, but these tend to be costly in both time and money. This paper examines another option—mindfulness. The American education system has seen mindfulness practices benefit student populations. Might these practices offer a cheap and effective solution for teachers? This thesis argues that mindfulness practices could prove to be beneficial, and examines how these practices would look when implemented into the lives of teachers, specifically educators of English and English language arts.

12 p.m.

SESSION FOUR

Panel I
KC 2259

Confronting Trauma through Literary Representation

Facilitators: Dr. Kathleen Blumreich & Dr. Corinna McLeod

Briana Green
'Warning: Students
are Not Blank Slates'

Outside of the classroom, the world is a scary, chaotic place. As teachers, it is our job to prepare students for society beyond school. Students are not blank slates; they walk through the school's doors with invisible stories and unseen traumas. Teaching as if students are clay that teachers can mold to fit a perfect sculpture is a fallacy. Books which teach students the realities of life, though dark, are invaluable to the teaching of English. These books profoundly affect students by teaching them the harsh truths of reality. When teaching trauma literature, it is imperative to use trigger warnings. Trigger warnings are constructive tools that can help give students notice before they encounter the trauma within a book. Many critics believe that trigger warnings aesthetically deprive the reading.

However, these triggers achieve the opposite: Students are able to experience heavy subjects vicariously without damage to their psyche.

Abigail Takacs
**‘Sexual Assault
Presented in Young
Adult Literature’**

My thesis focuses the theme of sexual assault in young adult literature. Focusing on five primary novels that have been published over the last twenty years, I analyze the way that rape myths are reinforced within these books. Some of these books have appeared as best-sellers, such as *Speak* and *The Way I Used to Be*. Some of the novels are fairly new, such as *Fault Line*. Although sexual assault is often a controversial topic, it is a relevant issue to discuss in today’s world with the #MeToo movement. I analyze the way that perspective can change a story and emphasize victim-blaming. One of the most important flaws that I have found in these novels is the abrupt endings that seem to leave the reader hanging. The idea that victims of sexual assault are forgotten is reinforced based on the endings of these novels.

Brie Tyler
**‘Trope v. Trauma:
The (Mis)Use of
Sexual Assault in
Dystopian Fiction’**

It is a disturbing trend in media to use rape and sexual assault as a trope implemented against the protagonist(s) in order to sensationalize and/or normalize the act in order to gain views or readership. Often, sexual assault is used to titillate or shock an audience, instead of to start a discussion on the prevalence of rape in our culture and the ramifications on the marginalized, easily-preyed-upon people in our society. With the growing presence of movements such as #MeToo and “Times Up,” however, there has been great outcry against rape culture in mass media. By looking through the lens of dystopian fiction and feminist theory, I argue that there are appropriate ways to use sexual assault in a narrative that validates victims while not becoming a trope, and that there are inappropriate ways to write it that trivializes the act.

Panel J
KC 2266

Reading for the Bias in Children's Literature

Facilitators: Dr. Sherry Johnson &
Dr. Janet Navarro

Michelle Essink
'Racial Bias and Stereotyping in Children's Books'

Through my research, I have found that white children are represented more frequently compared to other ethnicities, causing race to not be equally represented in children's books and short chapter books. In my thesis, I analyze books such as Matt De La Pena's *Last Stop on Market Street*. The book is one of many books that display a child of African American descent who lives in a city and is wondering why he can't have the same lifestyle that others have. One of my questions is why does this have to be an African American child, and does that confirm social stereotypes? In my thesis, I argue that multicultural books can be effective only if they give an accurate description of people in various cultures without relying on harmful stereotypes.

Carolyn Wynkoop
'Reading Caldecott Winners to Understand Racial Identity and White Privilege'

Literature is often a child's first encounter with society outside of their immediate familial existence. The lack of representation of people of color in literature negatively impacts the reader's construction of cultural identity and reinforces white privilege among younger generations. This essay aims to highlight the normalized underrepresentation of people of color in children's literature, and how the racial identification process is affected. My analysis of Caldecott Award-winning literature emphasizes the overarching, dismissive whiteness in children's literature, and I suggest the use of an alternative lens for identifying quality literature in opposition to the predominately white standards that are currently in practice.

Clara Thorpe
'Gender Stereotyping in Children's Literature'

Gender stereotyping in children's literature is an immense issue. The two-gender system, created by our binary society, has taken the voice from those who do not fit into this normative standard. Scholastic's 2019 list of the best-selling books for children shows evident gender stereotypes present in our children's books today, such as *Captain Underpants* and *Amelia Bedelia*. A book that divides a clear line between what is right for a male to do versus a female will engrave an image within a child's mind. The impact may be a child beginning to believe that if they do not fit into these binary categories, there is something wrong with their

identity. By exposing our youth to literature that challenges typical gender stereotypes, an authentic and confident identity can then be formed.

Panel K
KC 2270

The Art of Language Instruction

Facilitators: Dr. Dan Brown &
Dr. Rob Rozema

Morgan Selke
‘Teaching Figurative
Language to Students
with Cognitive
Impairments:
The Value of Poetry’

Students with cognitive disabilities struggle with comprehending figurative language. Often, they are unable to distinguish between the literal meaning and the figurative meaning of words and expressions. Such distinctions are important in the classroom, but because the use of figurative language extends well beyond its walls, students with cognitive disabilities who are unable to master it will have difficulty understanding conversations in their everyday lives. There are pedagogies established for teaching figurative language, but very few around the idea of poetry. This paper argues that English teachers should use poetry as a particular way to teach figurative language to students with cognitive disabilities. Doing so will help them to learn figurative language in context, but also to comprehend and appreciate poetry.

Emma Jennings
‘Technology v. Nature:
Impacts on Children’s
Vocabularies’

As society alters and adapts with the times, language follows. Children are coining new phrases and terms every day to keep up with technological advancements, especially in social media. Children are simultaneously losing allotments of their vocabularies from the natural world. Research indicates that today children spend less time outside than ever before. Elementary school students struggle to identify what an acorn is or what a crow looks like. Thus, when children are not exposed to this language of nature, they may never acquire it. With technology being humans’ main source of entertainment, children are also losing essential time reading physical books with other humans, including parents or classmates. The loss of these physical and natural connections to language and authentic reading experiences are altering today’s youth and their language abilities.

Sophie Foltz
**‘Arts Integration in
the Language Arts
Classroom’**

The arts, including music, drama, visual art, and dance, are often seen as “extracurriculars” in schools; they are not of primary importance because they aren’t the core subjects. Funding for the arts in schools is being cut nationwide, and elementary school teachers already have so many demands on their time that finding a place each day for music or dance or painting seems almost impossible. However, they don’t have to teach each artistic activity on its own. There is a good deal of research proving that arts integration into the core subjects benefits students because they learn the core subject better while also gaining exposure to the arts. To ensure students are receiving the best possible education, schools need to incorporate the arts directly into the classroom by integrating them with the core subjects. In this thesis, I focus specifically on integration into the language arts classroom.

1 p.m.

SESSION FIVE

Panel L
KC 2259

All in the Family

Facilitators: Dr. Rachel Anderson &
Dr. Avis Hewitt

Hannah Wikle
**‘The Problem with
Seeing Singleness
as a Problem’**

Singleness in the western world has historically and contemporarily connoted a marginalized, demeaned, and unhappy state of being, particularly for women. Popular culture and canonical literature perpetuate the ideology that singleness is a problem that needs to be solved. It would make sense for one of the greatest romance novels of all time, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, to exude this patriarchal ideology. However, *Pride and Prejudice*, while still true to its time, actually serves to subvert problematic singleness through the main character, Elizabeth Bennet. As a single woman, Elizabeth grows conscious of her identity outside of marriage. Jane Austen proves to her readers the value of singleness and the pitfalls of making marriage the ultimate goal.

Emily Ulanski
**‘Sacrificing Childhood
Dreams to Achieve a
New Kind of Morality’**

Critics writing about Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* have often applied a feminist lens to their interpretation of the text, causing them to dismiss Beth’s importance as Jo’s conscience throughout both parts of the novel. Such critics often elevate an

individual sense of morality rather than a communal sense of morality and create a conversation where Jo's character is stifled by the societal norms of the Civil War era. As this essay will argue, however, it is the communal morality that Jo encounters in the second half of the novel that redeems her after her loss of Beth and the downfall she experiences as a result of pursuing an individual sense of morality. When Jo comes back to the family to take care of Beth before she passes, Jo, by request of Beth, begins to take her place and realizes that childhood dreams mean nothing if family is not involved.

Taylor Stachowski
'From Orphans to Toxic Families: How Feyre's Story in *A Court of Thorns and Roses* Can Bring Readers Hope'

Where are all the stories today of orphans that were so popular in the last two centuries? They have been replaced in our era by tales of toxic families. Just as the popularity of orphan stories during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries correlated with orphans in the real world, the presence of dysfunctional family stories today reflect the social challenges of our time. By discussing the relationship between the main character Feyre and her family in the book *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, I showcase how the effects of toxic families can follow characters throughout their stories and how finding the right people and a place they belong can help them heal over time. In turn, I explore how novels in which characters experience life in toxic families can help contemporary readers in similar situations gain the hope that things can always get better.

Panel M
KC 2266

Natalie Curley
'Promoting the Patriarchy: How High School English Curriculum Has Thwarted Women and Encouraged Male Dominance'

'Classic' Confrontations

Facilitators: Dr. Kathleen Blumreich & Dr. Jo Miller

Works of literature within the literary canon have been deemed classics for a reason, often due to their willingness to discuss vital societal qualms. However, as our society continues to progress, many works within the literary canon have begun to appear problematic due to their misrepresentation, or lack of representation altogether, of strong, three-dimensional female characters. Instead, we are so often treated to female characters who by design are weak, ordinary, and oversexualized. This presentation analyzes how popular literary works such as *The Great Gatsby*,

Dracula, *The Crucible*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and Ovid's *Metamorphosis* all perpetuate unrealistic or stereotypical female identities. The issue with the literary canon taught in schools is twofold. Firstly, we observe adverse effects on the mental health of young women. Secondly, and most importantly, these works of literature reinforce the patriarchy when they place men in positions of power and women as their subordinates.

Cameron Amaya
'Edgar Allen Poe:
A Case Study of the
Effectiveness of
Teaching Canonical
Texts in 21st Century
Classrooms'

As the 21st century progresses, so does a trend among teachers and students to move away from emphasizing canonical texts in the English curriculum. Teachers and students are pushing for contemporary texts in the classroom that students may better relate to and that will capture their attention, but that will still cover the topics that older canonical texts and authors have been used for previously. However, we risk losing a part of our cultural, historical, and artistic legacy if we stop teaching these texts. Using the collected works of Edgar Allan Poe, I demonstrate that canonical authors such as Poe can still be tools that teachers can use in their classrooms. Poe as a case study is effective due to his vast contributions to the creation of new literary genres, as well as his insights into the psychology, culture, and popular attitudes of the American populace during his lifetime.

Jordan Holscher
'Standing Up to the
Challenges: The Case
of *The Kite Runner*'

Each year hundreds of books are challenged and removed from American classrooms. Many books that appear on the American Library Association's (ALA) annual top ten most challenged book list are celebrated for their lessons and great stories. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini is one text that continues to be targeted within various communities. Why is such a text often challenged? In 2017, *The Kite Runner* was on the ALA list because some communities thought the text was going to "lead to terrorism" and to "promote Islam," both reasons that were not previously mentioned in challenges to the book since its publication in 2003. In this paper I use *The Kite Runner* to argue the need to teach controversial and diverse literature within our schools in order to create more empathetic communities. I also consider how school administrators and citizens can take a stand against book challenging within their communities.

Panel N
KC 2270

Language and the ‘Other’

Facilitators: Dr. Dan Brown &
Dr. Christy Pearson

Melissa Lance
‘Linguistic Insecurities
in the English
Language: The Rise of
the Grammar Police’

Many English speakers respond negatively to non-standard language usage. These attitudes are commonly displayed by correcting someone’s grammar, popularly coined as grammar policing. While many view grammar policing as a casual act, researchers have determined that it’s actually a form of linguistic insecurity. English speakers have been developing this since the 1500s when language was tied to England’s class system. Those of higher classes, who held power, spoke properly, and those of lower classes spoke improperly. Thus, the two classes were distinguishable based on speech. As the lower classes adopted proper speech practices, the higher classes felt their power threatened, fearing language change. This fear was perpetuated by outside sources such as religious developments and the creation of dictionaries. In this paper, I argue that historical influences such as class, the creation of dictionaries, and religious change have developed into the linguistic insecurities that remain in our society today.

Keny Hernandez
‘Refugees and
America:
The Dichotomy
Between Her Words of
Hope and Her Policies
of Exclusion’

My thesis discusses the global refugee crisis and how, under President Trump’s Administration, it is practicing the discourse of *othering* in its immigration policies. These policies incorporate the corrosive language of exclusion, and their aim is to vilify and identify refugees as *the other*. As millions of refugees flee poverty and violence, many have sought safe refuge within democratic nations such as the United States. Many have sought America because of her promise of hope in the welcoming words bronzed at the feet of the Statue of Liberty, “*Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.*” I am relying on Valeria Luiselli’s moving text, *Tell Me How It Ends*, to describe what *othering* is, and how the effects of *othering* malignantly impact the lives of refugees who are beseeching Americans to welcome them and ascend to America’s aspirational words of promise, hope, and inclusion.

Hannah Robinson
‘Improving Lives with Literature: Reducing Rates of Recidivism and Mental Disorders through Prison Reading Programs’

An outrageous number of people enter the prison system at some point in their lives, and at least fifty percent return to prison within three years post-release. Furthermore, many prisoners suffer from at least one mental disorder. One solution, however, has the power to decrease rates of both prisoner recidivism *and* poor mental health. That solution is reading—not simply placing libraries in prisons, but rather integrating reading programs in which reading is balanced with social interaction. This can range anywhere from group discussions in which prisoners make text-to-self connections to creating video recordings of prisoners reading books for their children to view. While reading alone may further prisoners’ reading abilities and decreases boredom, adding a social aspect to reading allows prisoners to experience additional benefits. Prisoners improve communication and better understand their roles in society, leading to developments of greater self-worth and chances of remaining in society post-release.

2 p.m.

SESSION SIX

Panel 0
KC 2259

Kelsey Sheets
‘Broken Worlds Can Help Us Create a Whole Society: Teaching Young Adult Dystopian Literature’

Teaching Moral Responsibilities

Facilitators: Dr. Corinna McLeod & Dr. Jo Miller

There is a crisis happening within English classrooms: adolescent students are becoming aliterate. A growing lack of interest toward the use of the literary canon in the classroom causes students to miss the connections teachers want them to make. As teachers, a common goal is to help students become wiser citizens in their own societies, and we try to do that with the curriculum we teach. It is important to introduce literature in which students can see themselves, and that will encourage students to take responsibility for the events in their societies. However, when we do not provide literature that allows for those connections, students will fail to learn their own civic responsibilities. With examples from Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games*, I argue that introducing young adult dystopian literature in the classroom will help students learn about civic responsibility, leading to better lives for themselves and those around them.

Haley Marek
**'A Call to Action:
Eco-Literature, *The
Lorax*, and the
Child Activist'**

We have been squandering our resources for years, and with no action within the current administration, we must look to the future generation to fix past mistakes. Students such as Greta Thunberg have risen up as child activists for climate change, and it is only fair that other students be given an equal opportunity to do the same. It is an educator's responsibility to begin to plant seeds of hope in young students' minds and provide an environment that promotes the development of agency and critical thinking. Eco-literature, specifically *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, provides such a framework that allows activism to blossom. This study will examine the types of activism Eco-literature and *The Lorax's* call to action inspires and how such literature invites students to discover their agency and the impact they can have in the world.

Panel P
KC 2266

Seeking Diversity in Literature

Facilitators: Dr. Rachel Anderson &
Dr. Kurt Bullock

Ericka Wegener
**'Same-Sex Marriages
and Children's
Literature:
The Good, The Bad,
and the Ugly'**

This thesis examines the evolution of same-sex marriages in children's books from the United States. Three different children's books serve as case studies for my observations. These three books—*Heather Has Two Mommies*, *And Tango Makes Three*, and the children's magazine *Highlights*—are from three critical time periods throughout America's history. The early 1990s, the early 2000s, and the current years, have seen a progression in equality for all types of genders and sexualities. This thesis will discuss how same-sex marriage is portrayed in each book, how different or alike the book is from other children's books in each time period, and how the public reacted to each children's book. By looking at these, one will see that children's books mirror the progression, and setbacks, of marriage equality and the longing for acceptance by the LGBTQ community.

Alex Pierson
'Lack of Diversity in
Queer Young
Adult Literature'

Queer young adult novels increase readers' ability to embrace diversity in their society; however, my analysis of the novels reveals that many of the works are blind to their own bias and homophobia. I use queer theory to explore the lack of diversity in *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* written by Becky Albertalli and *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson* co-written by John Green and David Levithan. I also looked at The Lambda Literary and Stonewall Award winners in the LGBT Children's and Young Adult category. Factors such as author, characters, gender, economic status, and race, among others, are used to evaluate the diversity and subconscious homophobia within the chosen literature.

**Honoring Student
Writing in the
Persuasive and
Personal Essay,
Poetry, Fiction,
& Drama
Held in Conjunction
with the Departments
of Classics and
Writing**

Named in honor of former department member E. William Oldenburg, this annual contest offers GVSU students first-place prizes of \$50 and second- and third-place prizes of \$25 in each of the following categories:

- Personal, analytical, or persuasive essay written by a freshman;
- Personal essay written by a sophomore, junior, or senior;
- Analytical or persuasive essay written by a sophomore, junior, or senior;
- Poetry written by any GVSU undergraduate student (a portfolio of three to five poems would be an appropriate entry, and a single poem would not be considered);
- Fiction written by any GVSU undergraduate student (one short story per entrant);
- Drama written by any GVSU undergraduate student (one short play per entrant);
- Essay, poetry, fiction, or drama written by a GVSU graduate student.

Entry Requirements:

- Entries must have been written while enrolled at GVSU;
- Entries should be typed, double-spaced (photocopies are acceptable), and submitted with a detachable cover sheet indicating:
 - title of work;
 - category entered (please specify graduate or undergraduate);
 - contestant's name and student ID;
 - address, phone number, and e-mail for March and April of the academic year;
- Place contestant's name on the cover sheet only, not on the manuscript.

All winners who have not been or currently are a student employee at GVSU must complete an I-9 Form, which may be obtained and turned in to Student Employment (105 STU). Entries are accepted online through the English department website. Manuscripts will not be returned.

**The Robert C.
Chamberlain
Scholarship**
**A Tuition Scholarship
for Junior English
Majors
Demonstrating
Excellence in Writing**

The Chamberlain Scholarship will be awarded at the English Department's Awards Ceremony held in April.

Eligibility Requirements

- Students must be English majors;
- Students must have Junior status ;
- Students must have at least a 3.0 GPA ;
- Students must be full time;
- Students must demonstrate financial need by filing the FAFSA;

Application Requirements

Each student must submit:

- A short letter explaining why the student qualifies for this scholarship;
- Two pieces of writing, at least one from a class at Grand Valley State University;

Applications must be submitted online at:

www.gvsu.edu/scholarships

Application deadline is TBA, Winter 2020.

**The Gilbert R. and
Patricia K. Davis
Endowed Merit
Scholarship**
**A Merit Scholarship
for Full- or Part-Time
Junior and Senior
English Majors**

The Davis Scholarship will be awarded at the the English Department Awards Ceremony held in April.

Eligibility Requirements

- Students must be a Junior or Senior declared English major;
- Students must have completed 30 credit hours at GVSU;
- Students must have at least a 3.0 GPA;
- Students may be full or part time (part-time students are especially encouraged to apply);
- Financial need is not a criterion;
- Students who receive the award as Juniors are eligible to receive the award as Seniors if they maintain their eligibility.

**The English Faculty
Scholarship for
New Majors**
**A Scholarship Made
Possible through the
Generosity of GVSU
English Department
faculty members**

Applications Requirements

Applications must be submitted online at:

www.gvsu.edu/scholarships

Applications deadline is TBA, Winter 2020.

The English Faculty Scholarship for New Majors is awarded to two English majors annually at the English Department Awards Ceremony held in April.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be a declared English major at the time of application
- Applicants must be a currently-enrolled student with fewer than 60 credit hours completed (1st or 2nd year student) during the semester of application
- Cumulative 2.5 grade point average or better
- First-generation college student

Supplemental Questions

1. Are you the first person in your immediate family to pursue a college degree (neither parent/guardian(s) has a four-year degree)?
2. In 100-200 words (1-2 paragraphs), explain why you are applying for this scholarship, why you should receive the award, and how it will assist you in achieving your academic goals.
3. Why are you interested in this scholarship?

Please include an academic writing sample, minimum three full pages in length, submitted for a class during your freshman or sophomore year.

Applications Requirements:

Applications must be submitted online at:

www.gvsu.edu/scholarships

Application deadline is TBA, Winter 2020.

**Dr. Andrew M.C.
Brown Memorial
English Scholarship
A Scholarship
Created to Assist
Language &
Literature Emphasis
English Majors**

The Brown Scholarship will be awarded at the the English Department Awards Ceremony held in April.

Eligibility Requirements

- Candidates should be accepted or currently enrolled at GVSU;
- Must be a senior with a declared major in English with Language & Literature emphasis;
- Must be enrolled for at least 12 credit hours with a cumulative GPA of 3.3 or higher;
- Preference will be given to students intending to pursue an advanced English degree.

Financial need may be considered, as evidenced by filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Application Requirements

Each student must:

- Provide a short statement of why you qualify for this scholarship;
- Submit two pieces of writing, at least one from a GVSU English class.

Renewal Criteria: This scholarship is non-renewable. Award sum is \$2,000.

Application deadline is TBA, Winter 2020.



Amaya, Cameron — 21	McElwee, Anne — 15
Avery, Natalie — 9	O'Hearn, Rachel — 14
Belanger, Sarah — 13	Pierson, Alex — 25
Curley, Natalie — 20	Pratt, Emma — 8
Essink, Michelle — 17	Rainey, Alyssa — 10
Featherston, Alexandra — 5	Riddell, Tara — 8
Foltz, Sophie — 19	Robinson, Hannah — 23
Frederick, Emelia — 7	Schmitz, Melissa — 6
Garcia, Gerardo — 7	Selke, Morgan — 18
Gibson, Emily — 5	Sheets, Kelsey — 23
Gilbert, Emily — 14	Smith, Lauren — 8
Green, Briana — 15	Stachowski, Taylor — 20
Hernandez, Keny — 22	Takacs, Abigail — 16
Herrmann, Nikole — 9	Thorpe, Clara — 17
Holscher, Jordan — 21	Tran, Robing — 6
Huisman, Macayla — 13	Tyler, Brie — 16
Hysell, Cameron — 12	Ulanski, Emily — 19
Jennings, Emma — 18	Wegener, Ericka — 24
Kely, Aleigha — 11	Weinrick, Hannah — 4
Kline, Elora — 11	Wierenga, Alaina — 4
Kratt, Braxton — 10	Wikle, Hannah — 19
Lance, Melissa — 22	Wrighthouse, Frances — 12
Marek, Haley — 24	Wynkoop, Carolyn — 17