

*What we call the beginning is often the end,  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from.*  
T. S. Eliot

# English Department Capstone Conference



GRAND VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

11 December 2020  
Virtual Conference—Zoom Meetings  
Grand Valley State University  
Allendale, Michigan

# ENG 495 *Capstone Conference*

**11 December 2020**

**Virtual Conference—Zoom Sessions**

**Grand Valley State University**

**Allendale, Michigan**

Fall Semester 2020

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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*

Session Seven: 3-3:50 p.m.

*Panels Q & R*

## Notes

To all Capstone students:

Thank you for your patience, your flexibility, your determination, and your spirit as we have forged through a demanding semester together to reach this modified Capstone Conference. Revel in your success, and know you have our faculty's utmost respect and admiration for your achievement.

Professor Kurt Bullock, coordinator  
English Capstone Program

**Panel A****Creating a Healthy Classroom Environment**

Facilitators: Dr. Amy Masko &  
Dr. Brian White

**Ireland Somers**  
**‘The Evidence for**  
**Empathy: Empathy-**  
**Based Curriculum for**  
**Secondary Education’**

This presentation will focus on the importance of empathy in the classroom and how to address it in a curriculum geared towards secondary education—specifically 10th grade students. The relevance of empathy has been well established in the education community, but its implementation in curriculum is often broad, vague, spotty, or nonexistent. This capstone project will include a year of English curriculum dedicated to the theme of empathy and all its varying forms. Empathy can be taught through the use of literature such as *Lord of the Flies*, *The Road*, *The Hate U Give*, and various forms of social media. To supplement this literature, students will use the combined skills of reading, writing, and conversation to think critically about what it means to have empathy. This presentation will lay out the activities that will be used to support the literature chosen for the 10th grade year of empathy curriculum.

**Sarah Piotrowicz**  
**‘Advocating for**  
**Trauma-Informed**  
**Literacy Practices in**  
**K-12 Schools’**

In schools across the country, it is rare to find K-12 schools that implement trauma-informed literacy practices. In the content area of English language arts, this can take on different forms with the main ones being reading and writing. Teachers and pre-service teachers are well aware of the importance of creating a welcoming and safe classroom environment, but too often miss the importance and benefits of trauma-informed practices. The hesitation surrounding trauma-informed practices centers on the possibility of educators viewing their students in a different light once learning about students’ traumas. Unbeknownst to most, trauma-informed practices are beneficial to students and teachers alike. These practices allow students to work through traumas of varying types and degrees. Further, acknowledging traumas eliminates the possibility of student behaviors, performance, and abilities being chalked up to learning disorders, the need for special education services, or viewing the students as problem students or troublemakers.

**Haven Born**  
**'Bibliotherapy:  
The Healing Power  
of Literature'**

Bibliotherapy is the use of reading and literature to overcome mental health issues. Children are able to use any form of literature they enjoy in order to comfort their emotions and overcome mental health or everyday struggles. This presentation focuses specifically on depression and the ways in which bibliotherapy can be effective in the school setting. Bibliotherapy originated in the hospital and clinical setting and has now moved into the school system. There are precautions to be taken when implementing bibliotherapy into the classroom. The biggest precaution is selecting the proper books that will help the student to overcome depression and not worsen their case. The child needs to be able to connect the literature to their life. This thesis will focus on using bibliotherapy in conjunction with other forms of treatment and how to use bibliotherapy effectively in the classroom.

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**Panel B**      **Challenging Cultural Misrepresentation**

Facilitators: Dr. Dawn Evans &  
Dr. Janet Navarro

**Denise Hoyt**  
**'Developing  
Culturally-Relevant  
Representations in  
Children's and YA  
Literature'**

Using a Critical Race Theory framework, this paper addresses the lack of authentic cultural representations of those outside the mainstream culture in children's and young adult literature. The author also addresses how the depictions present play into the racial and cultural stereotypes of marginalized communities. These portrayals can have a negative effect on students of color and misinform white students about communities of color. Although research has found that the number of authentic texts is increasing, it is not happening quickly enough. In order to remove these false depictions, there must be more authors and illustrators from communities of color to write and illustrate authentic texts regarding their own lived experiences. Teachers and school librarians can help by creating classroom libraries that include more culturally-relevant texts by adding literature from authors and illustrators of color.

**Carley Brown**  
**‘The Significance of  
Race in Literature’**

Racial representation of students is a highly concerning topic among teachers. Educators want to be sure that all students feel heard and valued in their classroom. The way that one is represented can take a great toll on this sense of inclusion. Literature is a significant way that students are able to be represented within their classroom. This kind of representation can help students with their self-worth and personal views. This presentation will look at how different pieces of literature represent different races and how this representation may affect students overall.

**Kara Heugel**  
**‘A Shift from  
Achromatic:  
Diversifying the  
English Canon’**

While the United State of America is a largely white country, people of color make up roughly 39.9% of the population—and yet, they are barely represented or showcased in mainstream media and entertainment. This leads many minority individuals to feel as though they are less important than their white, straight, and/or male counterparts, who are regularly represented. Literature by a more diverse range of authors, with equally diverse characters, need to be consciously brought into English classrooms and the Western-English canon. While there will likely be a considerable amount of pushback to implementing new books into classrooms and the canon, it is something that will overall benefit students now and in the future, as it will challenge stereotypes, and help bring about more authentic stories to exemplify those who have previously been misrepresented and forgotten in literature.

**10 a.m.**

**SESSION TWO**

**Panel C**

**Path Corrections in ELL/ESL Education**

Facilitators: Dr. Adeline Borti &  
Dr. Dan Brown

**Alexis Freed**  
**‘The Fault in Our  
System with Educating  
ESL Students’**

As I near the end of my educational journey, I am intrigued by the drastic increase in English language learners (ELL)/English as Second Language (ESL) students in the United States. Many educators, students, and parents are raising concern about the gap between primary English learners and ELL/ESL as these students fail to receive proper assistance. This study aims to determine where the U.S. is falling

behind in this area of the educational field. Through thorough research, I have concluded that the root of this issue is due to the United States not having concrete standards to direct educators with helping ELL/ESL students reach success in the English classroom. For my presentation, I will discuss a portion of my research regarding how other countries implement a set of standards for their educators to best assist their ELL/ESL students, which increases the overall success rate of all students.

**Samuel Tetreault**  
**'Teaching ELLs:**  
**A Flawed Education**  
**System'**

My thesis is centered around English language learners (ELL) and the separation of theory and practice in the American education system. For the presentation, I will focus more on how classroom environments and home life play a vital role in the dysfunctional relationship between theory and practice for ELLs. The purpose of this research is to enlighten educators about the defective pedagogies that are implemented in mainstream classrooms. In theory, the engaging and interactive teaching methods that are administered in classrooms should help develop ELL students. However, these different strategies are faulty due to factors that are not necessarily always academic-related. My research demonstrates that cultural relevance in the classroom and parents of these ELL students have bigger impacts than one could fathom. It is salient for educators to become metacognitive about how they incorporate pedagogies in their curriculums

**Alexander Heckman**  
**'Reshaping**  
**Shakespeare:**  
**Differentiation and**  
**ELL/ESL Students'**

William Shakespeare has been intertwined in our country's overall culture and educational systems since his early publications. In almost every United States English secondary curriculum, students experience Shakespearian plays. Through tremendously significant for its well-accomplished writing skills, its themes and expression of the human condition, and its place in the history of literature and English, many ELLs/ESLs struggle to read Early Modern English without additional support. As the South and Midwest ELL/ESL enrollment surges, classrooms and their curriculums are not adapting to this growing need for assistance. In this essay, I argue that studying Shakespearian plays in secondary education needs to offer additional support and language scaffolding for ELLs/ESLs who may already struggle to learn English. Through differentiation, educators can adapt their curriculums to pair multicultural literature with



Shakespearian plays and still teach the various themes and ideas explored in Shakespeare while offering language scaffolding for additional student support.

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## **Panel D**    **The Objectification of Women in Literature**

Facilitators: Dr. Sherry Johnson & Dr. Jo Miller

### **Lidia Vesterfelt** **‘Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Reconstruction of Patriarchal Symbols’**

This presentation examines the life and writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, most famously known for her short story “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Gilman was a women’s rights activist who frequently analyzed the representation of gender in many of her published works despite her own internal dilemma with the subject. Throughout her writing, Gilman references symbols like wallpaper, the garden, feminine morality, domestic labor, the home, and capitalism, all of which traditionally embody patriarchal ideals. Using her personal experience and writing skill, Gilman challenges and reworks these symbols from a patriarchal to a feministic perspective in an attempt to denounce the patriarchy and its oppressive constraints against women. While most scholars agree that Gilman embodied feminist thinking, some question how radical her beliefs were due to contradictions found in her thinking and writing. The author concludes that Gilman’s personal struggles likely account for the lack of extremism in her writing

### **Shawn Roncka** **‘The Feminist Interrogation of Chinese Women in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Women Warrior*’**

Appropriate understanding of the representation and depiction of Chinese women in Maxine Hong Kingston’s novel *The Woman Warrior* allows for the layers of double standards placed on Chinese women to be studied and examined alongside feminist views like those essay collected in the book *This Bridge Called My Back*. This in-depth analysis of the portrayal of Chinese women aims to draw attention to the identity crisis that is created by the various expectations of these women. Data and testimonials will be used to outline the issues these women face in the pursuit of identity. Comparing *The Woman Warrior* to essays in *This Bridge Called My Back* emphasizes the ways in which Chinese women are pulled in various directions when finding their identity. This presentation will

focus on discussing the representation of Chinese women and the ramifications of those representations.

**Madison Vander Lugt**  
**‘White Standards of Beauty Imposed on Black Women: The Desire, Temptation, or Resistance of “Classing Off”’**

Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*, and Doja Cat’s media influence lend different perceptions of the black female experience with an emphasis on love and beauty. Hurston’s protagonist, Janie, is a black woman with all the trappings of whitewashed beauty: smooth hair, a light complexion, and an hourglass figure. She is accustomed to stares—the lusting of the men and the coveting of the women. However, in Morrison’s *A Mercy*, Florens, a black slave, scares a child, disgusts her black lover, and is unrecognizable as human to white villagers due to how dark her skin is. Beauty and societal acceptance rest heavily on skin color, as well as hair texture, facial features, and more. In this presentation, white beauty standards and how they affect Hurston’s and Morrison’s characters will be discussed, as well as the internalized racism of a modern-day, bi-racial celebrity, Doja Cat.

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**Panel E Narrative Alternatives in the Classroom**

Facilitators: Dr. Amy Masko &  
Dr. Corinna McLeod

**Jordyn VanDeVelde**  
**‘Graphic Novels: Enhancing Rigor in Classrooms’**

Trends in teaching strategies are incessantly evolving, while education experts and school administrations are left to make sense of which new developments are actually effective. In the past decade, graphic novels have become popular, not only as a genre for readers, but also as educational learning material. Teachers debate whether or not graphic novels are valuable in critical thinking and deepening rigor for their students, or if it creates laziness and intimidation when seeing traditional novels. This paper will discuss the many opinions on graphic novels in schools, as well as the varying benefits that graphic novels provide, arguing that the use of graphic novels within literature programs creates engaging communities and promotes a deeper level of thinking.

**Victoria Lozano**  
**'The Role of  
Storytelling in  
Improving Middle  
Grade Students'  
Reading Motivation'**

As learners matriculate through K-12 education, their motivation to read often declines. This disinterest may lead to students reading less frequently, which impacts comprehension as well as discourages students from becoming lifelong readers. The causes of this aversion to reading are attributed to many circumstances in schools today, among which are low reading comprehension and a lack of text diversity. In early grades, storytelling is more frequently utilized and involves engagement between the storyteller and audience. Scholars assert that storytelling improves listening comprehension, and some have suggested that there is a link between listening and reading comprehension. I argue that storytelling can be a useful tool for educators teaching students in the middle grades to improve reader motivation.

**11 a.m.**

**SESSION THREE**

**Panel F**

**Building an Antiracist Classroom**

Facilitators: Dr. Janet Navarro &  
Dr. Rob Rozema

**Bethany Mac**  
**'The Role that the  
Avoidance of Anti-  
Racist Education in  
the United States has  
in Maintaining  
Systematic Injustice  
for People of Color'**

For far too long the United States education system has neglected to take a firm stance on antiracism and anti-racist education. In doing so, the direct correlation between inequity in schools and race continues to grow; the topic of social injustice remains taboo among school administrators; students are not being given the tools or space to take action on their concerns of social injustice due to childism; and the school-to-prison pipeline is thriving because of harsh punishments, high expectations for behavior and low expectations for academic success, and unnecessary restrictions for students of color. Sixty-six years after Brown versus the Board of Education, the education world should be much further along in social justice, equitable education opportunities, and antiracism.

**Jasmine N. Wilson**  
**'The Marginalized  
Academic Experience  
of Black Students'**

There are a disproportionate number of White teachers in schools where black students are the majority. Along with this disproportion, the English curriculum is often centered around American literature written by white authors despite the research that suggests that African-American literature is critical

to the Black student's learning experience in school. It is widely accepted that African American students are marginalized in public schools, and this thesis specifically explores three important ways that students experience marginalization: 1) a lack of African American teachers; 2) an English curriculum that centers white authors; and 3) the way in which Black English/African American Vernacular is discouraged in Black schools.

**Kaitlyn Richardson**  
**'How to Teach Antiracism in Classic Classroom Literature by Incorporating Antiracist Literature and Popular Culture'**

Inspired by the uproar of the Black Lives Matter movement, a response to the incessant police brutality against Black lives in this country, I felt it my duty as a future educator to explore how English teachers can adopt antiracist pedagogy when teaching common classroom literature. Texts such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Things Fall Apart*, which center around themes of race, racism, and white supremacy, must be taught with antiracist methodology because it is not enough to not be racist; our students must understand the values of being antiracist. To accomplish this, I propose that we pair these classic texts with antiracist literature, such as Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*, to keep the curriculum anchored in antiracism. To aid in teaching this curriculum, teaching related popular culture alongside the texts, such as the film *Black Panther* or Beyoncé's song "Lemonade," will aid in learning.

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**Panel G**

**Gender Portrayal in Image & Word**

Facilitators: Dr. Lindsay Ellis &  
Dr. Sherry Johnson

**Sabrina Gonzales**  
**'Breaking Down the Social Construct of Manning-Up: Consequences of Masculinity Portrayal in Popular Media'**

The manner in which males are expected to behave is a socially-constructed set of guidelines that produce harmful effects regarding the ways that they generally perceive themselves and others. These sets of behaviors are strongly reinforced within the popular media that boys and men are exposed to. These representations make male viewers feel that they must also adhere to these behaviors in order to be accepted by society. It is important to consider how the media's exemplification of behaviors has a significant impact on those that are subjected to its content. My thesis explores some of these representations and the various impacts that they

have on males throughout the span of their lives and the ramifications on society as a whole.

**Mara Kico**  
**‘Gender-Diverse  
Representation in  
Picture Books’**

For almost everyone, picture books are the first introduction to literature. Not only do they entertain children and teach them the fundamentals of reading, but also they also help children understand the world around them. Recently, more research has been devoted to gender difference, and this topic has also started to make its way into picture books. Based on research and a survey of gender-diverse picture books, this paper concludes that picture books are conducive to teaching about gender diversity. The target demographic for picture books corresponds with key gender identity development milestones, and not including education on gender diversity has an adverse impact on both cis gender and transgender students. Additionally, for successful gender diversity education using picture books it is important to consider direct references to gender identity, human versus non-human characterization, style of text, diversity within gender identity, and diversity beyond gender identity.

**Jacob Coates**  
**‘Using Literature to  
Build a Safe  
Classroom for  
LGBTQ+ Students’**

Adolescence is a critical time for development, and students are not always backed by the school system with the support they need. During this period of growth, many students may be learning more about themselves or others, and some may even be questioning their sexuality, gender, or identity. In order to help students explore these questions and answer them, teachers must be able to provide a safe classroom that welcomes and encourages LGBTQ+ discussions. To this end, literature can be a powerful tool that has the ability to offer insight, spark important questions, and unveil unconscious bias. In this presentation I will discuss the ways in which English teachers can use literature to turn their classrooms into safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students that encourage identity exploration and go beyond simply advocating inclusion.

## **Panel H Rhetoric Within Christianity**

Facilitators: Dr. Fred Antczak &  
Dr. Brian White

**Laura Denlinger**  
**‘The Appeal of Paul’s**  
**Epistle: Analyzing**  
**Rhetoric and**  
**Language in 1**  
**Corinthians’**

The Apostle Paul has long been studied for his use of language in his Epistles. His persuasive language is often studied by theologians, researchers, and laymen alike. The messages that he preaches are controversial, but the way he uses language is undoubtedly a craft. In this thesis, the intent is to address why Paul’s writings are so often studied, how he uses language to present his messages, and how he uses persuasion so ardently. By studying Paul’s use of rhetoric, his appeal to the Church of Corinth in the book of 1 Corinthians can be better understood, particularly his significant focus on a call to unity. It is crucial to understand why Paul is calling the Church of Corinth into unity, how he uses language to make this appeal, and why we need to study this message today more than ever before.

**Erica Modderman**  
**‘Christianity and**  
**Moderism: How C.S.**  
**Lewis’s *The***  
***Screwtape Letters***  
**Deals with Dark**  
**Times in the**  
**Modernist Era’**

In times of crisis during the Modernist era, many theorists depended on experimentation, a formal tone and imagery to critique different parts of society. C. S. Lewis hated the Modernist era and heavily criticized the period in *The Screwtape Letters*. Demons in his novel expect that humans have a Modernist worldview. But Lewis uses their ideas to reveal hope in the midst of the chaos. The exposition will be focused on Letter XV specifically and the attitudes towards society and the future. Freud’s *Society and Its Discontents* is represented largely through the devils in Letter XV. Research was conducted in the C. S. Lewis Institute, Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Thomas Huxley, and the Christian Bible, among other sources. Lewis lived through uncertainty in times of crisis, and he believed that Christian or not, we can all stand to be better people despite, circumstance of hardship or trends in mindsets.

**Panel I****Past, Present & Future Literary Tenses**

Facilitators: Dr. Kurt Bullock &  
Dr. Ashley Shannon

**Kristie DeVlieger**  
**‘Postmodern Fairy  
Tales & Expressive  
Response’**

A postmodern retelling of sleeping beauty and the Holocaust, *Briar Rose* by Jane Yolen is the next step in the memetic evolution of fairy tales. The genres of fantasy and fairy tale are carefully combined with intertextuality to create an initiatory story that appeals to a modern audience. Weaving in Gemma's *Briar Rose* and a fantasy story that mimics the monomythic structure, the novel guides the reader towards ethical contemplation of the horrors of the Holocaust. Gemma's fairy tale allows her to confront and remember unprocessed trauma as well as a way to cling to the remains of her life in Poland. This juxtaposition of narrative memory and the reality of remembering that is carried out through Becca's search for Gemma's identity creates a layer of removal that provides the space for expressive response. Through this gap the reader is able to create personal meaning and connect with the dark reality of the events of the Holocaust

**Joe Groszkiewicz**  
**‘Every Year is the  
Year 2020:  
Thomas Pynchon’s  
*Bleeding Edge* and  
Dystopian Present’**

The dystopian literary genre is imagined to have some critical capacity to dissect the trends of the present and project them into a speculative future in order to perceive some alternate possible world. It defamiliarizes the present with the hope of creating critical distance. What, though, can the genre do when speculative future dystopia is outpaced by reality and there are no truly alternate futures for fiction to imagine besides lateral shifts or slight exaggerations of the present? Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* responds to the depletion of future imagination by looking back to the tumultuous turn of the millennium. The novel reintroduces the catastrophe of the past to today in an attempt to theorize the present as dystopia. In doing so, it tries to rediscover the critical capacity of dystopian fiction.

**Kinney Coleman**  
**‘Are There Black  
People in Narnia?  
Examining  
Afrofuturism and Its  
Importance to  
Society’**

As Black stories and struggles are highlighted with increasing frequency in the news, there has been a surge in demand for science fiction and fantasy literature written by and about Black people. This increased interest has been met with considerable negativity, including questions about the advantages of such diversity in literature and the relatability of Black characters. This paper argues that the emergence of Black narratives into the genre of science fiction and fantasy has a positive impact on society by influencing how and what people learn and how they think. In this paper, the impact is closely examined through the analysis of collected research conducted on books that became cultural phenomena, the Afrofuturism movement, and the psychological effects of literature on the human mind. This paper argues that diversity in literature is a necessary step to allow our society to continue to grow and progress.

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**Panel J**

**Engendering Success for All Students**

Facilitators: Dr. Lindsay Ellis &  
Dr. Dawn Evans

**Courtney Lambert**  
**‘Opportunity Gap:  
Why American  
Students Are  
Facing Disparities  
in Education’**

This thesis examines the opportunity gap, which is disparities in education or differences between school and school-related experiences available to families in different economic situations and how it impacts American students (Gorski, 2018). The research suggests numerous causes for the opportunity gap, including the disconnect between student and teacher culture, funding inequities, and extra academic resources students receive. This presentation examines ways the opportunity gap is present in the English Language Arts, as well as how the English Language Arts can address issue. Research does not provide a conclusion or resolution for the opportunity gap, but instead offers ways educators can minimize and address the problem within school buildings.

**Madeline Code**  
**‘The Opportunity Gap:  
Literature’s  
Connection and  
What Can Be Done’**

This presentation describes the Opportunity Gap that exists within the American education system, particularly as it relates to the English language arts. The research elucidates the difference between the achievement gap and the opportunity gap and explains that there should be a larger focus on opportunity. This is because a focus on achievement is just a focus



on outcomes. Ways to decrease the opportunity gap will be discussed, such as improving the education of novice teachers through literature to address deficit ideology, white resistance, and create empathy. This presentation explicates what issues are playing a part in widening the gap as well as what some schools are doing to successfully close the gap.

**Katelyn Churchill**  
**‘From Passive  
Learners to  
Autonomous Students’**

Creating meaningful learning experiences and encouraging students to become active participants in society is the goal of education. This can be achieved when teachers guide students towards self-sufficiency and autonomy in the classroom. Students that experience autonomy are more engaged and more likely to have meaningful learning experiences. However, students do not become autonomous learners overnight. It takes time, patience, and thoughtful scaffolding provided by skilled educators. Shifting responsibility towards learners is a process, one that includes teachers fostering and encouraging motivation within their students, and teachers providing multiple opportunities for students practice responsible choice. This presentation paves the route towards student autonomy, by exploring how to successfully implement choice and encourage motivation within students.

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**Panel K**

**Subverting the Master Narrative**

Facilitators: Dr. Pat Bloem &  
Dr. Corinna McLeod

**Katie Worden**  
**‘Revolt Versus  
Revolution: Why the  
Way We Teach About  
Slavery is Important’**

In history classes across America, students are taught what is known as the master narrative—a story that has been written about the United States in which America has made few, if any, mistakes since its “discovery” in 1492, and the mistakes that have been made are justified in the name of national security, the economy, or manifest destiny. Narratives about this country's history have been carefully manufactured using half-truths in order to teach young Americans that America is and always has been the greatest country in the world while the harsh realities of the treatment of minorities are ignored. My presentation examines how the master narrative discusses slavery, how that discussion harms Black people, and how counternarratives can be used

to positively impact the performance of Black students in the classroom.

**Kimberly Van Hecke**  
**'Recentering the  
American Curriculum'**

President Trump wishes to instate a "Patriotic Education" curriculum, where American students would not be taught to feel shameful of the history of the United States. This type of Eurocentric education already exists in America. Students, past and present, do not understand the true history of slavery and its ripples of systemic racism into present-day America. The 1619 Project—published by the *New York Times*, and released on the 400-year anniversary of the first enslaved Africans coming to the U.S.—is an important project filled with essays and media that should be included in American educational curriculum. Teaching The 1619 Project along with quality multicultural literature will center the history of slavery, elevating voices of Black Americans which have gone unheard. Teaching the history of racism in America will inspire students to treat each other better so we can improve and advance as a country.

**1 p.m.**

**SESSION FIVE**

**Panel L**

**Implications of Classroom Literature**

Facilitators: Dr. Fred Antczak &  
Dr. Brian Deyo

**Erin Harshberger**  
**'Violence as the Key  
to True Womanhood:  
Effects of the High  
School Canon on  
Female Survivors'**

This presentation examines the presence of the cult of true womanhood ideology in High School literature curriculums across America, and the effects of this presence on survivors of sexual assault and rape. The cult of true womanhood emphasized piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity in the nineteenth century to bolster white patriarchy and subordinate women, specifically women of color, through both demonizing sexuality and prizing virginity. The deployment of a literary canon that embraces novels of early time periods reinforces these detrimental ideals to young women, when studies demonstrate that they are disproportionately victims of assault, violence and PTSD. The results of this trauma points to increased mental health struggles, such as depression and anxiety, heightened suicidal thoughts and actions, acts of anger or aggression, and withdrawal from

socialization. Schools exacerbate these effects by requiring books where the woman either dies, or is shamed, controlled, and subjected to violence.

**Alexis Moran**  
**'The Effects on**  
**Students of**  
**Censorship in Young-**  
**Adult Literature'**

Throughout the United States today there are many young adult novels that can be found on the banned or censored list. Taking away these novels causes a disadvantage for the students within these school environments, however. Removing these novels places students in the position of missing out on multiple opportunities to expand their imagination and put themselves in other people's shoes. This presentation addresses the reasons as to why books are taken off the shelves, along with the disadvantages students face when missing out on the opportunity to read such novels. It is demonstrated that taking away such novels is detrimental to students and their well-being; rather, these novels are beneficial to students, shaping them into the person they are becoming.

**Chelsea Johnston**  
**'Embracing the**  
**Historical and**  
**Psychological Value**  
**of Young-Adult**  
**Thrillers'**

In the early 1990s *Goosebumps* became one of the most widely popular series among young adults in the "thriller" genre. While young adults enjoyed the series, parents and school libraries began questioning if the series was appropriate for school-aged children. Parents argued that the content within the books was too violent, disturbing, unrealistic, and inappropriate, with their ideals landing novels in the "thriller" genre for young adults on the banned book list in some schools. In this presentation I argue why the content of these books is so popular among young adults from a psychological and historical standpoint. The ideals that society seem to overlook when banning these books is that psychologically they are a safe way for children to experience and learn to control certain emotions. Historically, these stories are nothing more than classic folklore tales that have been told for hundreds of years.

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**Panel M**      **Disability & the Classroom**

Facilitators: Dr. Christy Pearson &  
Dr. Rob Rozema

**Natalie Wright**  
**‘ADHD and the**  
**Comprehension of**  
**Classroom Materials’**

Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) face many challenges while in the world of education, these challenges including development of comprehension and writing skills. Comprehension creates a sense of understanding of the information read and transcribes of what is remembered on paper. Students diagnosed with ADHD not only have to battle their limited attention span, but also their memory. When students quickly lose their attention, their comprehension declines as they are unable to remember the material they've previously read. Therefore, those with ADHD struggle within English and grammar classes, as comprehension assessment is a major component in this area of education. Overall, the short attention span and lack of memory in students with ADHD impacts their ability to comprehend literature and relay that information on an assessment.

**Katelyn Schwerin**  
**‘Teaching Tolerance:**  
**The Language of Bias**  
**in the Classroom’**

Recognizing lack of inclusion indicates the importance of educating students without disabilities to help them engage and accept students with disabilities in a mainstream classroom setting. The concept of inclusion could be aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) because it is the main goal of these two laws to implement safe and quality education for all students in a mainstream classroom. In addition, there is the idea of having the "least restrictive environment" for students who have disabilities in order to protect their right to a quality educational setting. We must teach tolerance by exploring the relationship between normal and abnormal mythology and understand the relationship that language has in tolerance-teaching. We can only control our own actions, so it is crucial to lead by example and create inclusive, non-biased, tolerance-type classrooms for all students.

**Marissa Hartman**  
**‘The Misrepresentation**  
**of Physical Disabilities**  
**in Children’s Literature’**

Children’s literature is important in a child’s development; they need to have well-rounded libraries. When thinking about those libraries, we think about how children’s literature needs more diversity in characters: people of color, native peoples, women, and people of different sexualities. What hasn’t been discussed as much is the misrepresentation of disabilities in children’s literature, specifically those with physical disabilities. Physical disabilities affect the

lives of over 61 million Americans, but there are very few books that represent them in children's literature. Here I have focused on three physical disabilities: people with wheelchairs, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and people who have a limb amputated. These disabilities are some of the most common disabilities seen in Americans, but not represented in children's literature. The representation of physical disabilities in children's literature can make an impact on a child's perspective and alter their development in a positive way.

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### Panel N

### Historical Connections in Literature

Facilitators: Dr. Jo Miller &  
Dr. Ashley Shannon

**Seth Miller**  
**'Locating Prometheus:**  
**Mary Shelley's**  
***Frankenstein,***  
**Percy Shelley's**  
***Prometheus Unbound,***  
**and Aeschylus's**  
***Prometheus Bound***'

Mary Shelley presents an overwhelmingly unfavorable view of the Prometheus she depicts as an irresponsible creator, worthy of the role of villain in her Gothic novel *Frankenstein*, while her husband, Percy Shelley, presents a seemingly opposite view of Prometheus as selfless liberator in his classically-inspired poem *Prometheus Unbound*. These descriptions alone would suggest that the two conceptions of Prometheus are contradictory, but when comparing the stories to the Greek myth surrounding the character, through Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, we can recognize how the disparate ideas of the Shelley's can be dovetailed, and are thus compatible conceptions. After supplying the distinguishing characteristics between the two main Prometheus characters, that of Mary and Percy, the root of each trait will be revealed in Aeschylus's *Prometheus* and an argument given that Mary presents Prometheus's sins and Percy Prometheus's virtues, with Aeschylus presenting the whole character in all his nuance.

**Raquel Torres**  
**'Sherlock Holmes**  
**and the Late**  
**Victorian Period'**

The late nineteenth century birthed many amazing, impactful authors who became representatives of their era. One of those authors was Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of the Sherlock Holmes short stories. Arthur Conan Doyle's depiction of Sherlock Holmes became a cultural phenomenon and a voice of the late Victorian era. Sherlock Holmes is a detective who solves crimes, represented so as to

satisfy the Victorians social norms. Sherlock's crimes aim to contain scandals that would destroy the conservative cage women were confined to, while also helping royalty preserve their social status and high ranking. Holmes and Watson's relationship represent the battle between religion and the scientific revolution that shook the world. Furthermore, the setting of Holmes' world is an extreme representation of the effects of the industrial revolution. The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle is a critique of the late Victorian Era.

**Alex Coy**  
**'The Art of Whistleblowing: Analyzing Ibsen's and Miller's *An Enemy of the People* in the 21st Century'**

*An Enemy of the People* was written in 1882 by playwright Henrik Ibsen and adapted in 1950 by Arthur Miller, but in both versions the protagonist is a whistleblower struggling to be heard. This presentation will analyze Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* alongside Miller's adaptation, examining the differences between Ibsen and Miller's characterization of Dr. Stockmann. Primarily focusing on the climax of the play, where Dr. Stockmann shares his findings to a crowd of townspeople, this presentation seeks to understand how Miller's modification to Ibsen's *Enemy* turns Dr. Stockmann into a more convincing and genial character with stronger rhetoric to persuade his audience. In recent years, there are significantly more cases of whistleblowers coming forward with confidential information that they believe should be public. By also analyzing the historical context of Ibsen and Miller's *Enemy*, this presentation seeks to better understand the importance of whistleblowers in the twenty-first century.

**2 p.m.**

**SESSION SIX**

**Panel 0**

**Literary Realities & Falsehoods**

Facilitators: Dr. Rachel Anderson & Dr. Pat Bloem

**Laura White**  
**'Reading Real Rodents'**

Mickey Mouse, Stuart Little, and Ratatouille are beloved household names, yet these rodents who are so endeared would meet a far more gruesome fate outside their imagined worlds. As scientific studies demonstrate, rats have demonstrated exceptional levels of intelligence and cognitive abilities, yet humans are quick to label them as abhorrent. While

real rodents have some supporters, the overwhelming majority of people find them repugnant. This paper explores rodents through the lens of literature, film, psychology, anthropology, science, history, and culture to gain a better understanding of the disparity that exists between the level of acceptance for fictional rodents versus their real-life counterparts.

**Reka Hoving**  
**'Fanfiction: Its Past,  
Present and Future'**

The question of fanfiction has plagued literary scholars since its inception in the 1960s. Many of these scholars denounce fanfiction as nothing important. They see it as amateurish when an author wants to write about someone else's characters or universe instead of creating their own. They don't see the value in reading stories that have not been officially published. In this presentation I argue that fanfiction is not at all a sign of an amateur writer, or reader. The world of fanfiction is bursting with creative and talented minds, just as it always has been. In fact, there is proof that quite a few authors that are included in the literary canon became well known because they wrote fanfiction to some degree. There are also educational and emotional benefits that can be found in writing and reading fanfiction. Travelling down these avenues prove that fanfiction is not only a legitimate form of literature, but also a crucial one.

**Austin Kazmierski**  
**'Happily Never After:  
How Happy Endings  
are Hurting Us'**

Why do we always want a happy ending? Whether it be in literature or film, people yearn for everything to turn out okay. Often forming strong connections to characters, we feel awful when things turn out poorly for them and even worse if we're left without answers. In this presentation I will examine our minds' reasoning for these thought processes through the lenses of psychology and English studies. Furthermore, I will be denouncing the claim that happy endings need to exist in these art forms for purposes of entertainment and exploring the idea that always having a one-note happy ending does more harm than good to our minds in both the short and long term.

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**Panel P**      **Questioning Educational Standards &  
Expectations**

Facilitators: Dr. Dan Brown &  
Dr. Dawn Evans

**Courtney Schuman**  
**‘The Efficacy of  
Standardized Testing’**

This presentation examines the effects of standardized testing on students, teachers, and schools. I will problematize the focus on standardized tests, which was heightened during the No Child Left Behind era, and analyze the impact the tests have had on the curriculum, particularly in the English Language Arts, student learning, and school funding. Overall, this presentation evaluates the efficacy of standardized testing for students, teachers, and schools.

**Sarah Garon**  
**‘English Education:  
The Public vs. Private  
School Debate’**

In the United States today, there is a sense of supreme-ness that comes with private education when compared to public schooling. The acceptance that public schools are expected to underperform private schools is a stigma that should be diminished, even though private schools have proven to have more successful students and test scores when it comes to English and Language Arts. Through my thesis, I focus on the factors that give private and public schools advantages and disadvantages in the world of English education.

**Madalyn Bacon**  
**‘Common Core  
State Standards:  
The Impact Within a  
Single Community’**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English have been a topic of discussion over the last decade in American Public Education. The pros and cons of CCSS have been studied over the years, and many have shared their own opinions about the standards, such as educators, professors, and even politicians. This presentation investigates the internal and external factors that are affecting teachers, students, and schools from implementing the CCSS successfully. Focusing on one West Michigan county, Muskegon, displays how vastly different schools can be in curriculum implementation even when they are in close physical proximity to one another, revealing the faults and flaws within the CCSS. Research, data, and supplemental interviews from Muskegon County public school teachers support the claim that there are gaps within the CCSS, and demonstrate that need for change to the standards is long overdue.



**Panel Q****The Price of Literacy Equality**

Facilitators: Dr. Brian Deyo &  
Dr. Christy Pearson

**Hannah Armstrong**  
**‘Poverty and How it**  
**Affects Academic**  
**Performance’**

A child walks into school with a hole in their right shoe and the same clothes on that they wore yesterday. Other students are going to look at them oddly and think of them as being different. There are physical differences and internal differences that each student has. These differences make the student who they are, but they also make it easier for some students and harder for others. Some of the differences that these students face are living in a high crime neighborhood, having a homelife disadvantage, struggling with stress from their home life, receiving low resources in the school, and acting out as a result of conflict or attention. As students grow up, their cognitive development is crucial, and without the right resources and a good home life, their cognitive development, and who they are can be affected.

**Emma Gray**  
**‘Poverty’s Mitigating**  
**Effects on Literacy**  
**and Counteracting**  
**Solutions’**

This presentation analyzes the body of research on the impact of poverty on students’ literacy achievement and schooling experience. Findings suggest that with a combination of outside barriers and the American school’s systemic inequity, there is a correlation between a student’s socioeconomic status and literacy skills. The implications of this thesis furthers the discussion of implicit stereotypes and attitudes towards these students that may negatively impact their literacy achievement. There are ways to counteract these detrimental factors, and this presentation discusses methods to incorporate these into the classroom to promote literacy and counter negative stereotypes and inequity for students living in poverty.

**Ashly Latham**  
**‘Teaching Literacy**  
**in the Black**  
**Community’**

Despite programs created to close the literacy gap between African-American and other minority students and white students, African American students are still falling behind their counterparts in literacy. This presentation takes an in-depth look at African-American home and classroom literacy

habits, the standards of Michigan state literacy, and current teacher practices in order to give current and future teachers helpful ways to bridge success to their African American students. This presentation will focus on two main ways to improve African-American literacy in the classroom: first, by checking our implicit bias and correctionist mindset against African American English (AAE) and becoming knowledgeable in it and using this to change the way we grade reading comprehension and writing; second, by using their home literacy culture as a bridge in our assignments and including culturally relevant pieces of literature into our lessons to increase reading engagement.

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**Panel R Nuances of Language Learning & Appreciation**

Facilitators: Dr. Adeline Borti & Dr. Dawn Evans

**Lauren Graham**  
**‘The Linguistically-Diverse Classroom: Reducing Linguistic Bias in Teachers and Students’**

As classrooms become increasingly diverse, many efforts have been put into place to remove racist ideologies and reduce bias in the classroom. Despite these efforts, however, linguistic bias remains a major issue. Many English teachers still view their role as advocates for Standard English, criticizing nonstandard dialects of English while having little to no understanding of their validity. This linguistic bias has affected the success and self-esteem of speakers of non-standard dialects of English. As nonstandard English speakers fall behind in school, researchers have explored ways to effectively teach students to adhere to Standard English forms. This framework ignores the larger issue of linguistic bias, expecting students to adhere to unfair stigmas surrounding their language use. Therefore, teachers and students should be properly trained to understand and advocate for linguistic diversity in the classroom, thus actively challenging harmful linguistic hierarchies.

**Lauren Mast**  
**‘Managing the Mother-Tongue Classroom Gap in the Netherlands & the U.S.’**

My presentation is based around my study abroad experience in the Netherlands in the summer of 2019 in an international K-12 school called United World Colleges Maastricht (UWC). My experience teaching and learning abroad left me with many questions. I came back to the States wondering why there is a gap between how schools like UWC

maintain and develop each student's mother tongue in their school classroom setting versus how schools in the United States handle the same scenario. My eyes were opened to how the staff and administrators handle their bilingual students' education and how it is handled in the United States. I noticed decisive differences in how students learn languages, how their mother tongue is encouraged or discouraged, and how their learning progresses forward despite the use of their mother tongue usage inside the classroom. This presentation investigates these differences to see how and why they exist.

**Lindsie Traxler**  
**'There is Something  
about Phonics: An  
Analysis of Phonics  
Instruction'**

Though phonics instruction is necessary for teaching students to read, there is much less agreement on how and when to implement phonics instruction. This paper addresses the highly debated teaching of phonics and how it fits into a balanced literacy approach. The use of decodable readers, sight word reading, and the application of phonics in authentic and meaningful literature are among the elements of phonics instruction discussed. If we can move past the false dichotomy of those advocating for or against phonics, many topics within phonics can gain the attention they have so long deserved. We can then see that synthetic systematic phonics is useful for general education students and disabled students.

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**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](http://www.gvsu.edu/scholarships)

Application deadline is TBA, Winter 2021.

**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.

**Applications Requirements**

Applications must be submitted online at:

[www.gvsu.edu/scholarships](http://www.gvsu.edu/scholarships)

Applications deadline is TBA, Winter 2021.

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

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](http://www.gvsu.edu/scholarships)

Application deadline is TBA, Winter 2021.

**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 2021.



Armstrong, Hannah – 24	Lambert, Courtney – 15
Bacon, Madalyn – 23	Latham, Ashly – 24
Born, Haven – 5	Lozano, Victoria – 10
Brown, Carley – 6	Mac, Bethany – 10
Churchill, Katelyn – 10	Mast, Lauren – 25
Coates, Jacob – 12	Miller, Seth – 20
Code, Madeline – 15	Modderman, Erica – 13
Coleman, Kinnedy – 15	Moran, Alexis – 18
Coy, Alexander – 21	Piotrowicz, Sarah – 4
Denlinger, Lauren – 13	Richardson, Kaitlyn – 11
DeVlieger, Kristie – 14	Roncka, Shawn – 8
Freed, Alexis – 6	Schuman, Courtney – 23
Garon, Sarah – 23	Schwerin, Katelyn – 19
Gonzales, Sabrina – 11	Somers, Ireland – 4
Graham, Lauren – 25	Tetreault, Samuel – 7
Gray, Emma – 24	Torres, Raquel – 20
Groszkiewicz, Joseph – 14	Traxler, Lindsie – 26
Harshberger, Erin – 17	Van Hecke, Kimberly – 17
Hartman, Marissa – 19	Vander Lugt, Madison – 9
Heckman, Alexander – 7	VanDeVelde, Jordyn – 9
Heugel, Kara – 6	Vesterfelt, Lidia – 8
Hoving, Reka – 22	White, Laura – 21
Hoyt, Denise – 5	Wilson, Jasmine – 10
Johnston, Chelsea – 18	Worden, Katherine – 16
Kazmierski, Austin – 22	Wright, Natalie – 19
Klco, Mara – 12	