“Hope” is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
Emily Dickinson
Capstone Conference

19 April 2019
Kirkhof Center
Grand Valley State University
Allendale, Michigan
Winter Semester 2019

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 publically 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

Session Three: 11-11:50 a.m.
Panels E, F & G

Session Four: 12-12:50 p.m.
Panels H, I & J

Session Five: 1-1:50 p.m.
Panels K, L & M

Session Six: 2-2:50 p.m.
Panels N, O & P

Session Seven: 3-3:50 p.m.
Panels Q, R & S

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.
“What is the importance of multiculturalism in children’s literature?” With numbers increasing in schools of children with diverse cultures, it is important for children to be introduced on the topic of multiculturalism. Educators have to have the specific training done in order for children to be knowledgeable about diversity. Multicultural children’s literature is one of the most effective learning tools incorporated into lesson planning about the topic of diversity. Children are encountering many different cultures and ethnicities, and the best way to know about the world around them is to read about it in literature. With children learning about diversity, it allows them to be open-minded about their community and welcoming to those around them.

In today’s society, there is a divide between members of differing cultures. Beginning in the early stages of life, children are unintentionally introduced to a multitude of attitudes toward other cultures. Students become ignorant of other cultures when they are not given the proper resources to view the world through other lenses. Through my research, I propose that the best solution for children to view the world from other perspectives is through multicultural literature. When appropriate multicultural literature is available to students in the classroom, the opportunity gap between culturally diverse students begins to decrease. Elementary students should be given books that allow them to see themselves in literature as well as allow them to see and experience differing cultures. Throughout my thesis, I will argue that in order to minimize the opportunity gaps among students of different cultural backgrounds, teachers must expose students to different perspectives through literature.
Multicultural literature is an increasingly important topic in twenty-first century educational discussions. As we see the cultural climate of our country change, our classrooms are going through a similar change, creating a more diverse classroom. Multicultural literature offers a variety of opportunities to explore and discuss the similarities and differences in culture, race, values and beliefs. Additionally, literature provides students with a mirror for themselves, an opportunity to experience cross-cultural variations of their own reality. The time students spend in school is crucial for exploration, meaning-making, and development of identity. This paper will examine the current standing of multicultural literature in pedagogical theory and the classroom and explore the significance of these works to developing ethnic identity.

Ashton VanKoevering
‘Multicultural Literature and Identity Development: Facilitating Acceptance in a Diverse Classroom’

Panel B
KC 2266
Meeting Special Needs
Facilitators: Dr. Lindsay Ellis & Dr. Rob Rozema

Maggie Tisdale
‘Strategies for Students with ADD/ADHD’

Students with ADD and ADHD are becoming more prevalent in classrooms due to better understandings of the disorder. Unfortunately, teachers, administrators and educators are focusing more on “handling” the behavioral problems sometimes associated with the disorder rather than focusing on the students’ need to learn. Medications and behavioral therapy are great options to help enhance the quality of life for students with ADD and ADHD, but students still need help processing and learning during their educational experience. Teachers are the key component in giving students the tools necessary to succeed in the classroom and for their future. I will be examining strategies that English and Language Arts teachers can incorporate into their classrooms to help students with ADD and ADHD. The more understanding and knowledge acquired by the teacher and the better-quality strategies that are used, the better quality of life the student will receive.
Teaching students with autism in the general education classroom is a controversial topic in the educational world. Scholars explore how to teach various components of language arts, promoting peer relationships with neurotypical peers, and recognizing the social challenges students with autism face. While most scholars focus on ways to successfully integrate students with autism in the General Education classroom using a variety of instructional methods, my research will focus on the use of the Language Arts classroom to promote peer relationships between students with autism and neurotypical students. By using literature and activities that evoke empathy, interaction, turn-taking, and that promote social skills, I will examine the benefits of including students with autism in the General Education Language Arts classroom. Specifically, I will be assessing the importance of social interaction amongst peers within the Language Arts classroom and explain why this needs more research.

In every school, elementary students are struggling daily with depression. Teachers are held responsible for fulfilling the needs of the students in their classroom through useful strategies; however, does meeting these needs include providing therapy for a complex medical condition when untrained in this area? With scholars supporting the use of bibliotherapy as a valuable answer for depression, an examination of the research indicates that there is still a lack of evidence that bibliotherapy is appropriate for all forms of depression. In this paper, I specifically will question the role of bibliotherapy as a universal answer for the complexity of depression among elementary students and advocate for more research in the use of bibliotherapy as a treatment for depression.
The topic of censorship in elementary schools is a controversial and sensitive subject. Censoring literature in schools removes anything that is deemed "inappropriate" for use in the classroom. Common controversial topics in children's literature are religion, sexuality, language, or values. Books like this can be challenged and sometimes removed from all bookshelves in that particular school. This issue is ongoing because of the many viewpoints people have in regards to what is appropriate for school-aged children to be reading. Most argue that students need independent choice with literature in order for them to become life-long readers. This paper will focus on elementary school teachers who disagree with censorship and how they deal with the issue. It will also be analyzing the impact censorship has on students and parents as well.

Children’s literature is constantly growing and changing in the world that we live in. Studying the books that children are reading at home and in school helps us get a better idea about what our world is portraying to the younger generations. Children’s literature is comprised of books to amuse, interest, and teach children. Scholars have varying ideas on what the role of the child is and what the family is comprised of, including the impact from teachers and publishing. This paper will be looking at how the view of family structure has changed in portrayal in children’s literature since the 1950s and why this is very important for our society to investigate, based on research from scholars and independent research on current children’s literature.

For years, preschool curriculum has neglected abundant amounts of research regarding the benefits of pretend play during a child’s early years. Free play has been reduced during school hours and is seen as a time-wasting activity. I strive to challenge this notion and provide play a place within children’s learning during school hours. I examine the
developmental stages of the brain from infancy to about six or seven years old to explain how children learn and explore the world around them. I look at the current curriculum of preschools and the lack of play within them. Finally, I bring the conversation back to pretend play and its rightful place within the preschool classroom.

It is no secret that quality preschool is the foundation to a successful future, but there are countless gaps in the educational system that allow children to fail. Using research, I have found evidence that supports the idea that institutional racism begins in preschools and creates disadvantages for most children of color. Although many have good intentions, teachers often come with their own biases and contribute to institutional racism on a daily basis. In order to properly fix the achievement and racial gaps in the educational system, these well-meaning teachers must be educated on the matter. By being exposed to the facts behind discrimination and inequality in our schooling programs, educators can reflect on their biases and actively strive to achieve an equitable and positive community.
the classroom. My paper will discuss this argument, first addressing the theory, and then rhyme’s application in the classroom through authors such as Dr. Seuss, showing that educators who understand not just the “how” of rhyme, but the “why” behind the theory, will be more effective in the Language Arts classroom.

Alexis Elizalde
‘Integrated Music Curriculum: An Effective Approach to Teaching Intermediate Literacy’

The concept of integrating musical elements into classroom instruction has been studied and debated for years. Research has found links between music education and early literacy/language development. Research has also found correlations between music instruction and improved math and science scores. However, the research conducted in this field neglects the influence integrated music curriculum has on intermediate literacy. This thesis will address the crisis surrounding literacy rates in the United States and examine a proposed solution to America’s literacy epidemic—integrated music curriculum. This paper will explain the benefits of integrated music curriculum and address why this pedagogical approach should be implemented in classrooms to improve intermediate literacy rates, and ultimately combat the pervasive problem of illiteracy plaguing the United States.

Claire Amat
‘Music and Phonological Awareness: A Powerful Combination for Reading Acquisition’

With technology related to the brain readily advancing, research has revealed how and where the brain processes certain functions. fMRI machines have shown where language is dominantly controlled as well as how the brain responds to music. Both music and language have distinct ties to phonological awareness, which is a predictor for later reading achievement. With reading standards becoming more rigorous, it is imperative that teachers use strategies that not only help them to achieve these benchmarks, but engage them as well. I will be presenting how and why music can be integrated into curriculum in order to improve reading achievement later on. Music has physical, psychological, and social benefits for all children, and furthermore, research shows that phonological awareness is a key indicator for strong readers. I will present explicit yet applicable and effective instructions on integrating music into elementary classrooms.
For years, racial discrimination was not only a domestic issue isolated to the United States, but an international issue as well. Unfortunately, institutionalized racism still remains a prevalent issue within the societal, academic and political institutions of today’s society. J. K. Rowling confronts overt racism, color-blind racism, and as well as color consciousness in the fictional world of Harry Potter. Through a literary approach, Rowling utilizes both major and minor characters to convey the race issue within our society while using pseudo-races such as Muggles, Mudbloods and Purebloods as examples. These literary characters allow for racism and antiracism to be addressed without villainizing any particular person or group of people. Rowling's characters not only exemplify race issues, but through the use of literary devices, these characters provide subliminal resolutions that can offer a roadmap of steps to lead our societies toward the real-world eradication of racism.

In this essay, I will evaluate three orphans in the Harry Potter series: Neville Longbottom, Luna Lovegood, and Hermione Granger. While none of these three characters in Harry Potter are “true orphans,” they all fit into the orphan motif because of their varying circumstances and characteristics. By investigating how these orphans are portrayed in J. K. Rowling's seven-book series, I can better see how this motif adds complexity to the stories they are in. Because orphans have made their appearances in a range of works across the centuries, yet hardly any scholars have focused their attention on them, it is worth taking a closer look at these forgotten-about characters.
The genre of young adult fiction has gained popularity in the recent years; its works have sparked the interest of readers of all ages. However, evidence illustrates the existence of common tropes and repetitive character archetypes in many works of fiction within the genre. Certain tropes in young adult literature, such as the “Chosen One” character archetype, limit the possibilities for overall development and agency within a protagonist. This paper will examine how the frame of the reoccurring “Chosen One” trope in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*—one of the most well-known works of young adult fiction—impacts Harry’s agency and character development throughout the story. Furthermore, I will exemplify how popular literary characters, who possess little to no agency and development, can have a negative impact on young adult readers and their views of self-advocacy.

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**Panel G**
**KC 2270**

**At Play with Gender & Ethnicity**
Facilitators: Dr. Jim Persoon & Dr. Ashley Shannon

All the world’s a stage, and Shakespeare’s minimal stage directions and character descriptions allow each performance of any given play to have a different reading based on the director’s personal interpretation. I focus specifically on *Romeo and Juliet*, as many contemporary adaptations have chosen to look into gender roles, homosocial versus homoerotic male relationships, the expectations of heterosexuality, and the performance of masculinity. I also address those whose research and readings advocate for more historically-accurate, socially-conservative stagings. *Romeo and Juliet* is a popular choice to engage with gender dynamics as the play includes both comedic and tragic aspects and gives rich examples of both homosocial relationships and heterosexual romances. The interrelation of these two concepts is what drives the plot and foretells the tragic ending of not only the heteroromantic relationship of Romeo and Juliet, but the homosocial relationships between Mercutio, Romeo, and Benvolio.
Mainstream comics have been the final stronghold of middle-class white America, struggling to branch out with diverse and authentic narratives. In the past decade, there has been a clear emphasis on bringing voices of marginalized groups into popular culture via mainstream media, and this has extended to comic books. While graphic novels from independent publishers have featured marginalized protagonists, the “Big Two,” Marvel Comics and DC Comics, have failed to bring new voices to hero comics. Using G. Willow Wilson’s first arc of Ms. Marvel, Kimberlé Crenshaw’s theories on intersectionality and a historical view of marginalized communities in comics, this project will examine equity in the comic book industry. Looking at a handful of creators, such as Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Dwayne McDuffie, this project will analyze how minority superheroes went from fighting common street thugs to mixing it up with A-list villains.

**Joel Kibbe**

‘Diversifying the Narrative: Representation and Humanization in Mainstream Comics’

There is perhaps no dialect that has received more attention in education discourse than African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). Linguists have dismissed the widely held idea that AAVE is a lazy, slang form of English and have proved it is a rule-governed, legitimate language. However, a stigma that AAVE is unprofessional and inappropriate persists. Further, there is an undeniable gap in the educational experience for white students and African-American students. Scholars have asserted that a large portion of this gap could be due to the ignorance of AAVE in classroom curriculum. While this is a controversial assertion in and of itself, many people who agree that this is true disagree on how this issue should be best corrected. The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate the need for incorporating AAVE into the classroom, and to provide suggestions for how to do so.

**Hannah Arnold**

‘The Need for Black English in the Classroom’

Encounters with African-American Vernacular English

Facilitators: Dr. Sherry Johnson & Dr. Amy Masko

**Panel H**

**KC 2259**
Abigail Tuttle
‘Code-Meshing, Not Code-Switching, in AAVE’

African-American students should be allowed to speak African-American English in the classroom through Code-Meshing rather than Code-Switching. In my research, the reasoning behind why the practice of Code-Switching is used in schools is taken into consideration, which is that Standard English rules are seen as the most “formal” form of language dialect and students will not be able to thrive if they don’t have the tool of speaking the Standard English dialect in professional settings. The idea that African-American English is “slang” is debunked with research and examples that prove African-American English is just as rule-governed as Standard English, and so the benefits of allowing students to Code-Mesh will be discussed. The findings of this research state that Code-Switching shows no overall improvement of African-American students’ careers and lives, and Code-Meshing creates a learning environment where they are able to express themselves freely.

Sarah McLellan
‘Digital Blackface and the Appropriation of African-American English Online’

Digital blackface has recently been addressed in discussions surrounding representation online. Research suggests that persons who do not speak African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) use the language in order to appear cooler, more well-rounded, and even more sympathetic to underrepresented groups. However, the use of AAVE by these speakers is often linguistically deviant from the rules that AAVE follows and is often used as a punchline. While research has been conducted on performative blackface, not much has been done on the topic of linguistic appropriation online. This paper will be examining previous research conducted on topics ranging from the history of blackface to “digitalk” to white fragility. Participatory culture theory will be used to show that the use of AAVE online by those who do not fluently speak the language is a morphed method of blackface.
The conventions of genre fiction are the building blocks that make works recognizable as being a part of that genre. When adapting something with such well-defined conventions as the superhero comic to television, creators have the choice to conform to the conventions of their source material, or to bend and break them. This includes conventions of genre that have historically been used to further the marginalization of oppressed populations. The CW’s 2018 series Black Lightning chooses to play with and move within the superhero genre to tell a story that uses familiar conventions through the lens of Black heroism, while acknowledging both the inherent complexity of heroism and the starkly-white space that Black Lightning is pushing into. It accomplishes this by presenting both heroism and Blackness as flexible and ephemeral concepts that must be embodied and informed by the series’ characters into order to matter.

Two contradictory events took place in 2012: Ernest Cline’s Ready Player One, a sci-fi novel focused on a vast videogame world and its players, won two separate awards, while a misogynistic hate group of male gamers lashed out (eventually spawning the #gamergate movement of 2014). During this time, research on Internet and gaming addiction reached new levels of understanding, signifying that the overconsumption of Internet and games leads to outlandish and reactionary behaviors as well as changes in the brain resembling damage done by heavy drug use. My argument is that with behavior found within the story’s characters, Wade, Aech, and Art3mis, alongside a deeper understanding behind video games and Internet and video game addiction, reveals that the behavior of their retro-futuristic internet game perpetuates toxic speech patterns, gender portrayals, and methods of control that allow a negative culture within gaming to persist.

Haley Hulan
“I’m Blackety Black, Y’all”—Conventions of the Superhero in Black Lightning

John DeBruyn
‘Reality Bytes: Ready Player One, Toxic Gaming Culture, and Internet and Gaming Addiction’
Hannah Gallon  
‘Bandersnatch: A Work of Metafiction, Electronic Literature, and a Multiple-Ending Narrative’

Bandersnatch, an interactive film set in the 1980s and a standalone film in the Black Mirror series, is a form of electronic literature that incorporates both self-reflexivity and multiple-ending narratives to create a work of metafiction. Bandersnatch is a film that asks the viewer to make decisions for a teenage videogame writer, Stefan. Within the film, Stefan is creating a videogame that asks the player to make choices, which will lead the videogame player to different endings. A Bandersnatch viewer’s decisions affects Stefan’s life and the following choices that will be presented. At the conclusion, there are five possible endings the viewer can receive, and each of these endings conclude with the failure of Stefan’s game. Both multiple-ending narratives and electronic literature have yet to gain the popularity they were predicted to when created in the eighties.

Panel J  
KC 2270  

Unusual Approaches with Secondary Literature  
Facilitators: Dr. David Alvarez & Dr. Jo Miller  

If you were to ask a student, whether in high school or college, what they had to read in English class, you would get some mixed answers dependent on the theme presented in that class. As a personal example, I was assigned texts such as All Quiet on the Western Front and The Things They Carried for my college-level Literature of War class, while my later Literary Responses to Death and Dying class required me to read World War Z. After studying literature for the past three years, I have recently found myself wondering: What books are soldiers required to read during periods such as basic training and conflicts, and what do they like to read in their spare time, if they do? This thesis will serve to answer those questions by gleaning information from various sources as well as testimonials taken from real-life veterans and current military personnel.

Afton Walker  
‘Dog Tags on a Dog-Eared Page’
Many critics view hip-hop harshly and negatively, and they refuse to believe that it could ever have a place within the secondary education English classroom, especially as a form of literature. However, many current scholars feel as though there are multiple benefits that result from the inclusion of hip-hop in the classroom, ranging from literary and critical thinking skills to further implementation of diversity and equal representation of students. This paper will examine how hip-hop could be included in the classroom and how it would benefit students in multiple ways, as well as debunk many false stereotypes that surround this genre of music and its culture.

The challenge of acquiring student involvement from every student in the classroom is a problem that has been defined as persistent and ageless by students, parents, and teachers alike. With this, educators are constantly and consistently finding new ways to excite and energize their students in regards to students’ own individual education(s). An idea that is often thought about, but is not always applied to every text brought to the (English) classroom, is the idea of pairing classic literature with recent film adaptations of that specific (classic) text. This essay discusses the opportunity that educators have with the novella *The Little Prince* by Antoine De Saint-Exupéry combined with the recent film adaptation *The Little Prince* directed by Mark Osborne, and how the opportunity to bring this combination to the lesson plans of all ages of students, from elementary to collegiate, is an asset that teachers have the chance to use.
Flannery O’Connor’s stories are widely analyzed for use of religious themes to consider, among other topics, O’Connor’s Southern ideologies. O’Connor often describes her characters that are seen as grotesque as the freaks in her stories, but what is it that makes these characters different from everyone else? O’Connor argues that it is her duty to write the ugliness of mankind into her stories to expose society’s flaws, othering her characters in the process. O’Connor’s stories such as “The Temple of the Holy Ghost” and “The Artificial Nigger” use these flaws to draw in readers. She confronts the issues of otherness through race, queerness, and theology by using them to define her characters, making them grotesque. However, her Catholicism has led her to give each freak a possibility of redemption. In most of the stories, her characters don’t save themselves because O’Connor wants to reveal the freaks of mankind through otherness.

Jack Kerouac’s novel On the Road is a written testament of the beatnik generation, valuing individual thought and rejecting social norms. It is the beating of the drum of the American youth’s sense of adventure and purpose. A closer examination through a present-day sociocultural lens lends itself to something less satisfying, with characters becoming less self-actualized. On the Road, is social commentary of the now 20-something generation’s juxtaposition of having the world at their fingertips, but still not cultivating purpose and identity with the help of the rustic, stripped-down metaphor that is the novel. In this paper, I will be addressing how the constant need for movement and purpose translates to the unrealistic desires of this generation, and how characters such as Dean Moriarty are embodiments of the “imagined figure” in the social media era, shedding light on where society was, is, and perhaps where it is going.

Tom Robbins has made his mark in the world of postmodern literature. From stories involving the stolen body of Jesus Christ to cowgirls with giant thumbs, he has proven himself worthy of translating his vivid imagination into prose. Criticism towards his work revolves around his seemingly incoherent plots and characters that emit no thoughtful moral lesson or lasting value. However, quite the opposite
The removal of censored novels from English classrooms throughout the United States has begun terminating middle school and high school students’ right to read. The majority of novels being censored from the English curriculum is due to the sexual content placed within young adult novels. Many wonder why educators fight against the censoring of novels if the reason they are being censored is due to the sexual content included. By analyzing the novels *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, and *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, all which are being censored from classrooms, this paper will show why educators are fighting for novels that contain overlooked lessons. This presentation will discuss why educators fight for their students’ rights to read as well as the lessons that go untaught when we censor novels out of our classrooms.

As mobile phones become increasingly popular among adolescents, they are also becoming increasingly criticized by teachers and administrations. This dissonance between students and teachers has led to the implementation of strict no-phone policies, despite the growing body of evidence that shows phones are beneficial to learning in English classroom settings. In fact, the use of texting has proven to increase student literacy. Texting is most popular among marginalized groups (e.g., minorities, learning impaired) in the school
Violence in literature and its effect on children has long been a debate among teachers and scholars. While it does have a place in children’s education, implementation of the material has been a challenge for teachers and parents to agree on. The focus of this paper is to address the benefits of violence in children’s literature and the ideal presentation of it in the classroom. Research has shown that violence in literature can have a negative impact on children; however, when implemented correctly, literature...
containing violence can positively impact children and their education. Censorship of certain novels has removed much of the violence portrayed within them, reducing much of the impact that the stories can have on children. Upon further examination of the potential benefits violent literature can have on children, it will become clear that this type of literature can and should be a part of every school’s curriculum.

The opinions we form as children shape the foundation of our character as adults. Many children grow up believing LGBTQ lifestyles are wrong in the eyes of society, and therefore, think poorly of people that embody those lifestyles. Many scholars agree that since literature is a dominant aspect of an elementary student’s academics, we need to use various literary works to expose our children to different lifestyles and multiple family dynamics. Teaching children about acceptance at an early age could potentially be the catalyst for how we unite ourselves as a society. We can achieve this through literature that reflects acceptance of individual lifestyles and the diversity in families. In this project, I demonstrate the benefits of exposing elementary students to LGBTQ themes and diverse family dynamics, while in turn showing how it would have the potential of creating a more accepting and united society.

It is imperative that children have access to books that are both a reflection of and an opposition within their lives. Windows and mirrors are necessary aspects to include in children’s literature. This not only allows them to grow from reading, but it allows them to develop their own identity. It is true that this idea has become more essential in the recent years, and it will only continue to become more popular. This paper will study particular literary works that allow children to learn new insights and reaffirm their own beliefs. It will also describe how widening students’ views of the world allows them to value other cultures as well as their own. I will argue the benefits of keeping multicultural literature in all elementary schools, and I will illustrate the effects such literature has on children.
Cyrena Johnson
‘Free Voluntary Reading as a Homework Program for Elementary Students’

When it comes to homework, there are those who argue for its worth, and those who demand it be removed from the curriculum. Researchers on both sides present their positions in the best interest of the students. However, studies regarding the effect of homework on elementary student success are unreliable, due to the excessive presence of confounding variables. In this presentation, I will discuss the issues currently in debate regarding homework, and I will present factors associated with homework and success for elementary students. Most excitingly, I will discuss a Free Voluntary Reading program as the most effective homework option for large gains in elementary student development, providing suggestions for elementary teachers regarding how to get the most out of their student homework plans.

Sabrina Hochhuth
‘Using Personalized Technology to Target Early Elementary Readers’

Targeting where early elementary students are having inaccuracies with reading instruction is essential to find the proper assistance for each individual’s perception. Online reading instructional programs, such as Netpost and HER, are able to target at-risk students who struggle with reading comprehension, fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness and vocabulary. Research shows that approaching reading lessons with individualized technology results in positive gains in elementary students’ recognition of reading frameworks. Students are growing up in a digital age where learning is happening on and off screen, but can too much be harmful? How can teachers find a constructive balance between technology serving a specific purpose to produce achievement and technology that turns into addiction? Finding harmony with technology is crucial if teachers are going to benefit from personalized technology. If done appropriately, using interactive mediums in reading lessons can lead to an
Wendy Hoekstra  
‘Michigan’s Read by Grade Three Law: Will Many of Michigan’s Third Graders be Retained Next Year?’

In 2016, Michigan legislators passed House Bill 4482—now known as the Read by Grade Three law—that requires the retention of third graders whose scores do not meet M-STEP ELA benchmarks beginning in 2020. The law is not without controversy as 56% of third-graders who took the 2017-18 M-STEP failed to meet ELA proficiency standards, suggesting similar results are eminent next year, and conflicting studies continue to spark debate over the merits of retention. Additionally, of those failing students, most were living in poverty, English language learners, or children of color, so there is concern regarding the punitive ramifications the law could have on these marginalized subgroups. Given these findings, is retention the best possible solution? This work argues that to improve student literacy, the emphasis should be on the implementation of additional early education programming, professional development training for educators, and interventions that incorporate the support of caregivers.

Panel 0  
KC 2266  
Destabilizing Feminine Boundaries  
Facilitators: Dr. Brian Deyo & Dr. Rob Franciosi

In nearly every civilization throughout history, there has been some form of mermaid mythology. For many, these legends are considered frivolous entertainment; however, these myths have deep roots in the maintenance and cultivation of gender norms and the degradation of female initiative. In an intersectional analysis of three cultures and the mermaid legends found within them, a common pattern emerges regarding mythological expression, in the form of strict societal expectations regarding the acceptable performance of one’s femininity. Analyzed is the Inuit legend of Sedna, Danish author Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Little Mermaid*, and the west African myth of the Mami Wata through an Igbo-Nigerian perspective. The subversive theme in mermaid folklore has evolved with each culture and
continues to this day in modern representations of mermaids in popular media leading one to ask: What are the modern implications of mermaids on the feminine ideal?

Marta Norkus
‘The Gilda Stories and Twilight: Reinforcing and Disregarding Traditional Gender and Sexuality Norms’

Twilight by Stephenie Meyer presents a narrative involving traditional ideas about relationships, gender, and sexuality due to its stereotypical gender roles, promotion of abstinence, and reinforcement of an all-consuming love. However, Twilight, one of the most popular vampire novels in the country, is contrasted with The Gilda Stories by Jewelle Gomez, a vampire novel featuring a black, lesbian protagonist. The Gilda Stories does not bolster conservative ideas about gender and sexuality due to its multiple lesbian relationships that do not reflect homonormative gender or sexual roles. Moreover, The Gilda Stories highlights ardent, licentious sex scenes and pragmatic love between the characters.

Courtney Van Horn
‘Violence Against Women and the Feminine: The Romanticization of the Spectacle of Trauma and Its Representation in the Media’

Depictions of violent crimes against women are often a feature in media entertainment. From classic film to the modern horror, these films depict the violent murders of women at the hands of men as entertainment to shock and desensitize viewers. Recently, this genre has transformed into “true crime” television and serial killer documentaries and memoirs that focus on realistic interpretations of violence against women. These programs often take true murder stories and dramatize them with famous actors to create a wide fan base that obsessively consumes the trauma of women. This essentializes women in the role of victim and men in the role of perpetrator as well as lends to the romanticization of female brutality. This essay will use feminist and gender theory as well as aspects of body politics to question media’s portrayal of the spectacle of female trauma as entertainment and the reasoning behind the brutalization of women.

Panel P
KC 2270
Poetry, Then & Now
Facilitators: Dr. Karen Pezzetti & Dr. Mike Webster
Kyle O’Connor
‘Creating Distinctions: Haiku and Its English Translations’

As the world becomes increasingly globalized, the advantage and ability to connect with other cultures is easier than ever before. One of the most beneficial aspects of globalization comes from the writings of other cultures. With these texts, however, there comes a problem, as well—translation. In some cases, a translation can perfectly reflect the original, but when translating haiku poetry from Japan, this expectation is close to unattainable. Haiku reflects Japanese culture and is written with these assumptions and sensibilities in mind. When haiku is translated, these ideas are lost to the English speakers who consume them. Building on previous scholars, I will examine the differences between original and translated haiku and show that haiku translations should be viewed as their own unique art form, rather than a copy of the original.

Collin Hubbard
‘How Hip-Hop Helps Us Overcome the Postmodern Condition’

Hip-Hop, and more specifically Rap/Poetry, is situated in a unique place to be able to challenge many of the problems that arise from the postmodern condition. I have utilized the works of Frederic Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard to provide the criteria for the defining characteristics of the postmodern condition. Once I have established Hip-Hop within this frame, and as a product of postmodern society, I will then discuss how it uniquely tackles the issues of the postmodern condition. I hope to be able to sample the works of four artists with the intention of displaying how they individually deal with the problems of postmodernity. If poetry is to move forward and conquer the postmodern condition, then it can only do so by incorporating, adapting, and including the poetry of this new generation of poets.

Evan Sturgeon
‘Escaping the Institution: Comparing Ideas of Identity in “The New Negro” and “To Pimp a Butterfly”’

The Harlem Renaissance has long been studied as one of the most important cultural movements of the 20th century. Researchers have explored how intellectuals of the time defined the African American experience in the United States. Scholars today have made broad comparisons between the Harlem Renaissance and the contemporary hip-hop movement. I take this research a step further by comparing a specific Harlem Renaissance text with a specific hip hop text: Alain Locke’s 1925 essay “The New Negro” and Kendrick Lamar’s 2015 album To Pimp a Butterfly. In doing so, I will analyze how both
Diverse groups of students often struggle with aspects in their life that can affect their progression throughout their schooling. A special focus is on African Americans, English Language Learners, students with disabilities and poverty-stricken students. Each group of students at an early age is negatively affected differently, but are all assumed by the administration to progress if they are held back a year. A law was put into play that retains these students, but they can still be exempted from retention even if they do fall below reading level. Accumulated studies have shown that students do not benefit from being retained and dropout rates increase. A basis for understanding the negative effects in retention is learned via research alternatives and acceleration activities that can improve the students' overall learning.

Bilingual education has helped to foster new growth in language acquisition as well as encourage and educate students to learn in a language different than their mother tongue. In diverse environments, how do schools choose which languages will be used for instruction when not every student has working knowledge of the dominating language of that region? Teachers and school districts tend to continue to suggest that different requirements for English language learners are necessary to reach similar learning goals, but would this suggestion continue to isolate those students even further from their monolingual peers? By using urban and suburban classrooms as examples on a global scale, this thesis will give insights about the values of a
Secondary English teachers continuously find themselves running into the same issue: How can they keep their students engaged in literature? It is agreed upon that teaching students literature in which they can find relevancy in is the best way to reach students, yet it seems that students still are not gaining such an experience. Students are stuck reading the same books that were taught over twenty-five years ago while there is more recent contemporary literature that contains relevant themes that the students will be better able to appreciate. I will discuss student and teacher preferences for the literature used in classrooms. I will demonstrate how the contemporary novels are multilingual education, and how to continue to represent different languages and cultures in one cohesive classroom.

Taking into consideration the growing multi-leveled needs of adult students in the English as a Second Language classroom today, extensive reading may be a beneficial practice for comprehension and learning for all adult ESL students—even those with low-level literacy. This project will explore the benefits, methods, uses, and special accommodations that must be made within the adult ESL classroom relating to extensive reading. It will also explore the psychological aspects that affect an adult student’s ability to learn, and how reading for pleasure may aid in those psychological, and even physiological, aspects that often are overlooked when discussing and researching extensive reading practices. Extensive reading aids learners in obtaining cultural information and connections while extending their English language proficiency and ensuring a low-stress, beneficial environment that in turn leads to confidence and growth in one’s own language abilities and quality of life in the United States.
more relevant, and I will present examples of new novels that should be taught either in addition to or as a replacement for the classic novels. Overall, my project will address the importance of utilizing contemporary literature in addition to classical.

Reading is dying. Even though English educators strive to promote the habit of reading, adolescents read less and less as they progress through their education. In addition, many students exit high school viewing reading as a purely efferent, information-seeking exercise rather than an interactive, aesthetic experience with the text. The classics do not fix these problems. The disadvantages of teaching the classics, as they are currently taught, outweigh the benefits that the classics bring. Thus, despite the misconceptions about and opposition to young adult literature, contemporary young adult literature is the path to re-engaging adolescents with reading. Young adult literature should become the dominant literature in the classroom because it fulfills the same roles as the classics and, unlike the classics, it helps educators to achieve the goals of teaching literature—promoting lifelong reading and preparing students for the future.

High school English classrooms have spent years repeating the same curriculum. For generations, canonical literature has dominated secondary English education, focusing on the outdated works of white men. Why has this prevailed for so many years when school populations continue to become more and more diverse? This, along with the need for multicultural literature to replace the canon and a guide of suggested books to teach will be offered in my project. Multicultural literature benefits nonwhite students because it boosts their confidence, gives them role models, and allows them to see that they are not alone in whatever they face. White children benefit from multicultural literature as well because it widens their perspectives, thus allowing for an inclusive classroom. Through the knowledge and willingness of teachers to incorporate multicultural literature into their classrooms and curriculum, the lives of all students can be transformed in a positive way.
Panel S  
KC 2270  

**All About Words**  
Facilitators: Dr. Kathleen Blumreich & Dr. Shinian Wu

Sophie Rickey  
*(A)*I Want to Be Just Like You: The Future of Artificial Intelligence and Linguistics*  
The recent astronomical technological advancements have led to the creation of things once thought to be fantasy. Dystopian literature foretold the coming of computers and machines that looked and acted like humans. That future is now. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a large part of society, but how close can AI get to being human? Speech patterns, voice recognition, and diction are all factors that can take artificial intelligence over that comfort zone. From a linguistic perspective, we will delve into this uncanny valley.

Jessica Sylvester  
*Influential Words: Mass Media and Politics of Anti-Blackness*  
In contemporary society, where technology and mass media continue to grow, the political language choices Caucasian Americans make online and through television news broadcasts, including words such as “coon,” play a significant role in how they characterize themselves and those belonging to different racial or ethnic groups. While Caucasian American’s have seemingly become more accepting of African-American diversity in the United States, social and news media have clouded the way in which Caucasian American's discuss African-American racial issues. Behind curtains of coercion, news and social media have shifted from overt racism to a subtle form of racist hate speech. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the sociolinguistic factors that influence Caucasian American and African American identity and analyze the impact that subtle hate speech and appropriated language have on the viewers of social media, televised media, and politics pertaining to Anti-blackness in the United States.

Alex Licata  
*Code-Meshing Practice in Racially Minoritized Secondary Classrooms*  
Code-meshing and its parent ideology, code switching, have sparked debate in the world of education. They are practices that take place beyond the classroom, but are prevalent in all levels of education when it comes to language acquisition. Students who mainly speak African American Vernacular English, and students who are learning English as a second language, have been exposed to one or both of these methods, in secondary
classrooms especially. The similarities in the methodology of code-switching and code-meshing make it difficult for teachers to decide which practice is best or if using one is necessary at all. The works of authors such as Vershawn Ashanti Young and Suresh Canagarajah typify the code-meshing pedagogy, and separate the fine-line between it and the code-switching ideology of Wheeler and Swords. Using the culmination of these authors’ main works, this report will aim to show the benefits of practicing code-meshing with minority students.
4 p.m.  AWARDS

Annual Awards Ceremony
KC 0058

Please join us in honoring our students during the English Department’s Annual Awards Ceremony, held in the Thornapple Room of the Kirkhof Center.
ENGLISH DEPT.  OLDENBURG WRITING CONTEST

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 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 Davis Scholarship will be awarded at 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
Applications deadline is TBA, Winter 2020.

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
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 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.
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