In His Museum of the Universe
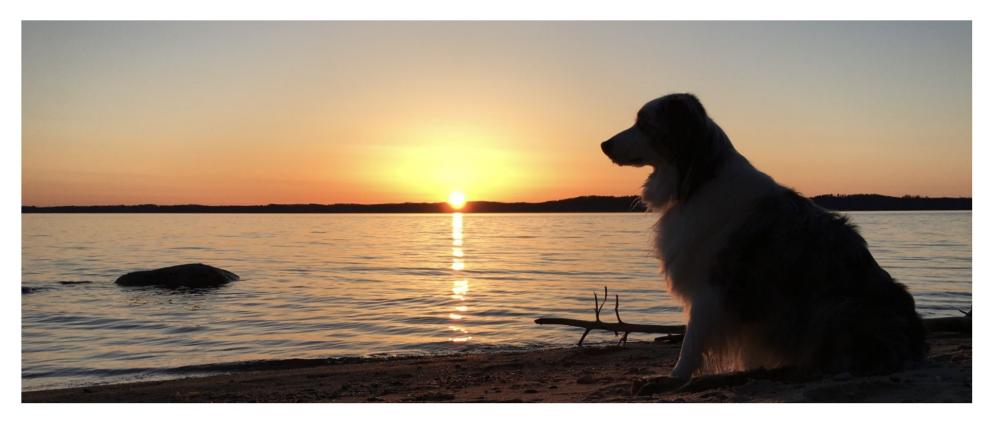
Dog has everything that is / was / will be

in exact replica

even the passage of time.

– C. K. Stead "Creation etc"

English Department
Capstone Conference

GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY.
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

18 April 2025

Kirkhof Center

Grand Valley State University

Allendale, Michigan

ENG 495

Capstone Conference

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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 (reflective writing); 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: 10-10:50 a.m.

Panel A & B

Session Two: 11-11:50 p.m.

Panels C & D

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

Panels E & F

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

Panels G, H & I

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

Panels J, K & L

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.

Panel A
KC 2266

In Other Worlds
Facilitators: Dr. Rob Rozema &
Dr. Brian White

Avery Smith
'Using *Harry Potter* to Teach Young Adult Literature'

Young Adult (YA) literature is often undervalued in educational settings due to the misconception that the genre is not academically rigorous. However, based on research, this genre of literature plays a crucial role in engagement and connection as it offers relatability in navigating the hardships and difficulties of adolescence. By homing in on emotions, changes, and experiences, readers are able to grasp and resonate with characters in fictional stories they read. In this study, I highlight the advantages of incorporating a well-known YA literature series, *Harry Potter* by J. K. Rowling, to exemplify the educational benefits of using this genre in a classroom. In my research, I have examined studies on student engagement, pedagogical approaches, literary development, and cultural and social aspects. In using all perspectives, this presentation will dismantle critiques surrounding the series and the genre while displaying the educational potential of integrating YA literature into classrooms.

Courtney Hess
'We're All Infected: Integrating *The Walking Dead* into the Secondary English Classroom'

Despite the worldwide pop culture success of *The Walking Dead*, the multi-modal franchise has received little respect in the literary canon. Though several researchers have argued for the moral value *The Walking Dead* offers, few researchers have opened the question to how *The Walking Dead* can function in a secondary academic environment. This paper argues for the integration of the franchise in a secondary English classroom as a way to teach intentional character education through the themes of morality explored within the graphic novel, television show, and video game. If used in a character education format that allows students to uncover their own morality rather than teach students specific right versus wrong moral codes, *The Walking Dead* can provide a critical narrative on the perception of human nature and morally sound decisions, allowing students to uncover how to live their own life through moral decision-making and leadership qualities.

Karis Gillespie

'Dystopian Fiction & Critical Pedagogy: Fostering Adolescent Activism through Popular Literature'

Dystopian fiction has a distinct appeal to young adult readers, and when harnessed, such intrigue offers a powerful tool for engaging adolescent readers with complex societal issues. My thesis explores how this genre aligns with adolescent development, fostering critical thinking about power, identity, and justice beyond the pages, beyond the classroom. By integrating critical pedagogy, educators can use popular dystopian texts such as *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanne Collins to encourage students to reflect on real-world injustices in the United States and take meaningful action. Drawing on Paulo Freire's principles, dystopian fiction has the capacity to inspire both dialogue and civic action— empowering students to challenge societal norms and envision freer futures— sparking social transformation within their own community. By channeling the unsettling realms of dystopian fiction, educators have the opportunity to turn students into the revolutionaries of tomorrow, armed with examples and role models to change their world.

Panel B

KC 2270

Shaping Heroes & Villains

Facilitators: Dr. Rachel Anderson & Dr. Kurt Bullock

Thaddeus Konieczny

'Chosen by Whom? *Dune* **and the Dangers of Hero Worship'**

This presentation examines events in the first two books in the *Dune* series of novels: *Dune* and *Dune Messiah*. One of the least discussed aspects of the series is the way it purposely subverts traditional conceptions of heroism. This study begins by analyzing both novels to explain how author Frank Herbert critiques heroism and what conclusions the reader is meant to draw from this criticism. My study begins by exploring how Herbert's commentary applies to real-life historical and sociological analysis. Ideologies and sociological concepts such as imperialism, capitalism, religion, and environmentalism are included in this analysis. Two primary types of literature were collected for the research process: literature analyzing *Dune* and similar media, and literature analyzing the sociological and political causes and effects of heroism. This article acts as a case study for how literature can act as both a criticism of existing literature and a criticism of the world around it.

Anna Morgan

'Real Horror Lives with Us: Malevolent Villains & the Portrayal of Mental Illness in Cinematic Horror'

The horror genre often encourages people to question what elements in a story are fact or fiction. One area that is constantly tested is the relationship between mental illness and the malevolent characteristics of a villain. Historical and psychological research exposes the ways that mental illness is stigmatized and used by cinema, furthering a negative impact on those who have a mental illness in reality. However, the mindset toward mental illness is changing, and there are new ideas to learn from horror films. Although it may seem that Martin Scorsese's film *Shutter Island* continues the misrepresentation of people with mental illnesses as villainous, further analysis encourages audiences to dive deeper into the societal ideas that link mental illness with villainy. Furthermore, characters in the film, such as Teddy Daniels, Chuck Aule, Dr. Cawley, and Dolores, influence viewers to self-reflect on their perceptions of mental illness and villainy.

11 a.m.	SESSION TWO

Panel C

KC 2266

How We Frame Gender

Facilitators: Dr. Rachel Anderson & Dr. Tierney Powell

Genevieve Fitch

'Mary, Mary, & Ilona: One Hundred Years of America's Sweethearts'

My thesis analyzes the lives and careers of Hollywood's "it girls." Specifically, I focused on anyone who attained the status of "America's Sweetheart" during their lifetime. Initially, I selected articles that followed the life of Mary Pickford, America's First Sweetheart, and the evolution of her appearance. Then, I analyzed the role of Mary Tyler Moore in second-wave feminism and how she became the second widely-accepted American Sweetheart, America's Feminist Sweetheart. I later discuss the progression in the acceptance of different appearances of women in Hollywood and the most recent and surprising sweetheart, Ilona Maher, America's Unexpected Sweetheart. I focus primarily on the early years of second-wave feminism to postfeminist intersectionality and the lack of LGBTQ+ perspectives, identifying key components of America's Sweethearts to generate one well-rounded definition of the title.

Addison Heimbuch

'Challenging the Playbook: Gender Stereotypes in Sports Romance'

Sports romance literature holds the power to change narratives and influence societal views on gender roles, blending the distinct aspects of sports and romance. Both genres face criticism and stigmatization, but *The Graham Effect* by Elle Kennedy disrupts traditional gender ideologies. This research explores the overlap between gender stereotypes in sports and romance literature, showing how the novel bridges these domains to contribute to conversations on evolving gender roles. Peer-reviewed articles and scholarly texts were analyzed to examine gender representation in literature and sports culture; findings reveal that *The Graham Effect* challenges gender norms by portraying emotionally complex male characters, emphasizing female ambition in male-dominated sports, and questioning beauty standards. Through character development and narrative choices, the novel exemplifies how sports romance literature can transcend entertainment, offering valuable insights into the shifting landscape of gender norms in contemporary athletics and romance.

Anne Davey

'Beyond the Closet under the Stairs: The Influence of *Harry Potter* LGBTQ+ Fan Fiction on the Queer Lit Genre'

Harry Potter took the world by storm with its sweeping success; however, the story does not end with the final installment of the series. One of the most significant contributors to this ongoing legacy is the fan fiction community, which has allowed readers to expand and explore new dynamics of the Wizarding World, and thus their own identities. Fanfiction surrounding *Harry Potter* has allowed the community to expand the boundaries on societal norms and has become a safe place for expression, developing a more lasting cultural impact by fostering creativity, inclusivity, and community engagement. This paper will establish how without the influence of these fan fictions the *Harry Potter* universe would not have reached the success it did, as well as how fan fictions can be viewed as a revolutionizing aspect of the queer lit genre and prompt readers to consider fan fiction more broadly as literature.

Panel D

KC 2270

Canonical Teaching Practices

Facilitators: Dr. David Álvarez & Dr. Rob Franciosi

Emma McAdow
'Reimagining the Canon in the English Classroom: A Balanced Approach'

Traditional English curricula often prioritizes canonical literature for its historical significance and literary merit. However, limiting instruction to these texts fails to reflect the diverse identities and lived experiences of today's students. This paper argues that integrating Young Adult literature alongside canonical texts allows educators to make classical works more relevant and meaningful. By incorporating pedagogical approaches that connect literature to students' lives, educators can cultivate deeper engagement with material, critical thinking, and a more inclusive classroom environment. This balanced approach not only enhances students' comprehension of canonical texts but also allows them to relate to the content they are learning. Through an analysis of existing scholarship and pedagogical practices, it is evident that expanding literature instruction beyond the canon can create a more student-centered learning experience, ultimately making the classroom a more effective space for all learners.

Natalie Niehaus
'Something Accessible This Way Comes: Using Supplemental Materials to Teach *MacBeth*'

When teaching *Macbeth* to high school students, incorporating supplemental materials alongside the original text can help break down barriers posed by Elizabethan English, empowering all students to enhance their connection with the play in both academic and personal contexts. Supplementary materials create opportunities for a more equitable classroom, ensuring that all students—regardless of reading ability or language background—have equal opportunities to engage with and understand the content. This paper acknowledges that while continued research and systematic reform are necessary to address the challenges of rigid content standards, pacing constraints, and inequitable resource distribution, educators can adopt targeted strategies to make Shakespeare's work more accessible. All students deserve the opportunity to fully engage with *Macbeth*, a text rich in literary and cultural significance. By integrating supplemental materials effectively, educators can transform *Macbeth* from an intimidating challenge into an enriching experience, one that resonates with a diverse range of learners.

Aeryn Hart

'Teaching Tragedy, Teaching Humanity: An Empathy-Driven Approach to Analyzing Shakespeare'

The teaching of tragedy as a literary genre at the secondary level is, unfortunately, often limited to *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Macbeth*. In an effort to build on, rather than add to, the existing discourse surrounding the minutiae of text selection, this paper aims to address students' disconnect from a tragedy-centric curriculum due to its failings in the realm of character education. The current way tragedy is taught under the 2010 Common Core State Standards does not allow for the emotional and ethical developmental progress high school students must make on the road to adulthood. However, this paper finds that purposeful, empathy-driven analysis of popular Shakespearean tragedies fulfills this need. If encouraged to link their lives and beliefs with those of fictional, tragic characters, students can develop self-efficacy, tolerance, and empathy while maintaining positive academic achievement.

12 p.m.	SESSION THREE

Panel E
KC 2266

Of Agency, Morality & Trust
Facilitators: Dr. Kurt Bullock &
Dr. Brian Deyo

Cullen Forster

'Trust & Failure to Trust in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*'

Who do you trust, and why? Whose trust do you take for granted? In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Harry Potter is faced with challenges to the limits of his ability trust others, between apparent abandonment by his mentor, and his friends being unwilling or unable to tell him what's going on in the wizarding world. This paper examines the avenues of trust in the novel, be it in the media, the government, professors, friends, adults, and even in Harry himself. This consideration of the novel is conducted using an aloof view of major and minor characterization events in the plot.

Elijah King

'Distorting Time to Defeat Determinism: Temporal Distortion in *Slaughterhouse Five & Sirens of Titans*'

In both *Slaughterhouse Five* and *Sirens of Titan*, Kurt Vonnegut presents a distorted view of time in a unique and complex fashion. This begs the question of how Vonnegut's usage of temporal distortion affects a reader's interpretation of determinism and free-will, major themes in both works. Utilizing various articles that explore the themes of *Slaughterhouse Five* and *Sirens of Titan* and the messages conveyed in them as well as

articles exploring the usage of temporal distortion in other works, the purpose and outcomes of Vonnegut's distortion are made clear. Ultimately, Vonnegut's distortion serves two purposes: first, to force the reader to reassess the typically held views of helplessness and determinism that are prevalent in modern society; and second, to impress the importance of the unique and subjective human experience and its effect in reestablishing individual agency and free-will.

Matthew Stine

'To Redeem a Demon: Shifting Perceptions of Morality between *David Copperfield* **&** *Demon Copperfield***'**

This thesis explores how Barbara Kingsolver reinterprets the work of Charles Dickens with particular emphasis on the implications for moral frameworks. More than simply modernizing the setting of *David Copperfield*, Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* subverts the moral schema presented by Dickens. Through compilation of scholarship on Dickens' views, I will demonstrate that his position can be described as deterministic rather than agentic. This project will extend that conversation to include Kingsolver's retelling. Within this context, I will demonstrate that Kingsolver's shift in moral framework acknowledges her protagonist's moral agency by holding him accountable in ways Dickens never does. Dickens is often regarded as a uniquely compassionate author. While this is true in his contemporary situation, this thesis will show that his schema of morality should be reevaluated as deficient in the face of modern moral thought.

Panel F
KC 2270

Missed Educational Opportunities

Facilitators: Mr. Roy Black & Dr. John Gibbons

Elise Van Meurs

'Connecting with the Local through Meaningful Language: Place-based Education for ELLs'

As our English learner population increases each year in Michigan, secondary teachers are tasked with the joyful duty of engaging teenagers in learning a new language in possibly a completely new culture. Unfortunately, students from all backgrounds are becoming less engaged in learning as addiction to technology and mandated testing increases. One promising solution is place-based education which focuses on connecting students' cultural assets with their local community, environment and content knowledge. This allows ELLs to learn and utilize meaningful language in local contexts. My thesis

explores an abundance of research supporting outdoor and place-based education and engagement strategies for ELLs, like content language integrated learning, which will set the pedagogical foundation. Furthermore, practical strategies along with example lesson plans will be included, from both practicing teachers and my pre service experience. This research can be utilized by all in-service and pre-service teachers, but especially those working with English learners.

Eleanor Widmaier
'Exploring how Secondary Classroom Libraries Impact Students' Reading for Pleasure'

Existing literature acknowledges the importance of both classroom library content diversity and student reading for pleasure. Interestingly, the connection between classroom libraries and student experiences with reading for pleasure has not been fully researched despite the fact that classroom libraries play a huge role in ELA classrooms. This qualitative study explores how secondary classroom libraries should investigate reading far beyond traditional ELA classroom books in order to help students develop reading enjoyment. It is no secret that only a handful of students enjoy reading, and this is partially due to the fact that classroom libraries are not expansive enough. Diverse resources like audiobooks are rarely included in classroom settings despite their appeal to students and ability to boost reading engagement. To develop these findings, I analyzed peer-reviewed articles about reading and libraries. Implications indicate that secondary ELA classrooms might have difficulties with limitations such as funding and time management.

Makaela Thornton
'Beyond Automation: AI's Role in Teaching, Collaboration & Learning'

Generative AI is a language-producing Artificial Intelligence system that is reshaping the way education is given and received. While some scholars fear it will replace the vital role teachers serve, others argue it will do the opposite. Generative AI has the potential to support teachers by streamlining administrative tasks, providing targeted feedback, and adapting instruction to individual student needs. However, proper guidelines and training must be created and implemented to ensure AI enhances learning rather than disrupts it. This thesis examines AI's role as a collaborative partner in education, highlighting its ability to lessen teacher workloads, encourage deeper student engagement, and build more responsive education. AI is meant to be a tool for collaboration, rather than a replacement for human creativity, expression, or autonomy. By approaching AI as a tool

for enhanced collaboration with thoughtful implementation, schools can maximize its benefits without sacrificing the essential classroom teacher's role.

1 p.m.	SESSION FOUR

Panel G
KC 2259

Multicultural Perspectives

Facilitators: Dr. David Álvarez & Dr. Adeline Borti

Carter Jones-Hirr
'Preventing the Poetry Paradox: From Alienation to Appreciation in Literary Education'

Poetry is often considered a vital component of literary education, yet many students—particularly multilingual learners (MLs)—struggle to engage with it due to linguistic barriers, inaccessible teaching methods, and lack of culturally relevant materials. Traditional poetry instruction prioritizes rigid analysis and standardized assessments, making poetry an academic hurdle rather than a form of personal expression. For MLs, figurative language, idioms, and archaic vocabulary further alienates them from poetry, reinforcing the perception that it is disconnected from their lived experiences. This presentation explores the challenges MLs face in poetry education and advocates for more inclusive pedagogy. Research highlights that shifting from assessment-driven instruction to culturally-responsive, student-centered teaching enhances MLs' literacy and self-expression. By leveraging poetry as a tool for linguistic and personal growth, educators create dynamic, inclusive classrooms where students engage meaningfully with literature. Reimagining poetry instruction bridges linguistic and cultural divides, ensuring it remains a transformative experience for students.

Kaylee Edmonds
'The Death of Empathy: Using Multicultural Literature as a Tool of Resistance'

Our public school system has become a battleground for attacks against Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). With increased censorship of curricula and literature, classrooms must become spaces of resistance where all students feel valued and safe. In the English classroom, emphasizing multicultural literature to foster empathy and critical thinking is paramount. The principles of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) provide the pedagogical framework to challenge these

barriers and prepare students for a diverse world. By including multicultural literature, students can engage with complex social issues and develop an awareness and empathy for others. Using *Solito* (2022) by Javier Zamora as a case study, this presentation explores how multicultural literature cultivates empathy, awareness, and critical thinking. As book bans and anti-DEI legislation increase, educators must embrace inclusive strategies using multicultural literature that empower students to challenge complex problems within our society.

Panel H
KC 2266

Women's Truths
Facilitators: Dr. Corinna McLeod & Dr. Tierney Powell

Claire Huston
'Kiss, Marry, Quest: The Intersection of Romance & Fantasy in Modern Literature'

In recent years, the modern romance novel community has experienced an increased amount of popularity and notoriety, particularly with the rise of the romantic fantasy subgenre. Readers are showing increased interest in novels that break the mold of the traditional romantic story, providing diverse and exploratory interests. Romantic literature has been a predominantly female-dominated industry, and fantasy has been dominated by males, creating the assumption that women are less interested in fantasy-based stories. This stereotype has been proven to be false, with the romantasy genre appealing to readers who enjoy the intersection of both genres. This presentation will explore and analyze the romantic fantasy genre through its rise in popularity, success, and story depth which has made it one of the defining modern trends in romantic literature.

Andrea Motyka
'The Myth of Motherhood: Patriarchy's Fiction versus Women's Nuanced Perspectives in Literature'

Throughout human history, women's time and energy have been delegated by the patriarchy; their roles in society have traditionally been limited to those of wife and mother. And, like any other assigned role, a corresponding set of rules and expectations exists. As the supposed arbiter of society's reality, the patriarchy expects endless patience, joy, and devotion of wives and mothers, establishing these impossible traits as the cultural norm. Consequently, differing experiences are cause for demonization of individual women rather than the system they struggle against. After analyzing

patriarchy's oppressive hegemonic forces and their effects, this essay compares the ideal to women's truths as conveyed through their semi-autobiographical works of fiction, asserting that women's nuanced perspectives often contradict the romanticized version of womanhood prescribed to them. By discussing experiences that deviate from patriarchy's narrative, they become normalized, and the strict dichotomy of good or defective women can be dispelled.

Alexis LaPoe

'"The Queen Who was Promised": Agency & Autonomy in *Throne of Glass*'

Aelin Galathynius, the protagonist of Sarah J. Maas's *Throne of Glass* series, is often celebrated as a powerful female character in the young adult genre. However, her journey raises important questions about agency and autonomy, with debate over whether she is self-determined or shaped by external forces like gendered expectations, manipulation, and prophecy. This paper explores Aelin's struggle between empowerment and lack of control, arguing that her narrative does reveal key moments of true agency. By examining feminist critiques of fantasy, this study demonstrates how Aelin's path challenges traditional narratives of victimization, highlighting her gradual shift from being constrained to asserting her independence. Despite outside influences, her resistance emphasizes her evolving autonomy as the series progresses. This analysis positions Aelin as a complex figure whose path to power challenges traditional depictions of female protagonists in fantasy, offering a more multifaceted perspective on female agency in young adult literature.

Panel I
KC 2270

Educational Concerns

Facilitators: Mr. Roy Black & Dr. Rob Rozema

Cole Gaskin

'Using Literature & Language to Reach Rural Students in Poverty'

There have been many teaching methods implemented to try to counteract the disadvantages within schools, specifically high-poverty urban schools with high ethnic diversity, and culturally sustaining pedagogy is one of the more popular methods utilized to close the opportunity gap. However, there are limited studies that discuss utilizing rural culture for culturally-sustaining pedagogy, even though rurality meets the criteria to be defined as a culture. There is evidence in the literature presented that rurality can be defined as

a culture from the unique geographic features of rural America, the tight-knit community structure, and the many non-standard English dialects present in rural areas. This essay will explore theoretical ways that rurality can be used in a culturally-sustaining ELA classroom using both classical and contemporary literature that reflect rural culture and will provide sample lesson plans that could be used to implement the theoretical into the classroom.

Morgan Terpstra
'Movement: The Evolution of Teaching to Fit the Needs of the Whole Child'

Teaching methodology has changed over many years in elementary schools around the United States. Teaching delivery methods have shifted to a movement-based approach that does not neglect the whole view of a child. Schools have put pressure on elementary students to perform well, neglecting a component adolescents need most: movement. This research examines the multiple effects of using movement in elementary schools and how schools can best implement these practices to reduce sedentary learning. Peer-reviewed research has shown the benefits of movement and the barriers to schools not choosing movement implementation. The study suggests that movement is crucial in schools to achieve success for students inside and outside the classroom. The thesis poses the question: What are the effects of using movement in elementary schools, and how can schools best implement these practices to reduce sedentary learning?

Catherine Battaglia
'Access to Equal Education: Adaptations for Students with ASD'

Today, one in thirty-six K–12 aged students are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) each year (CDC). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, around 67% of students receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) spend 80% or more of their time in school in general education settings. Students with ASD are seen to struggle with many items that are required for success by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Adaptations are necessary to provide adequate education for students with ASD. This presentation will explore issues students with ASD are currently facing in the general education setting, along with possible solutions and integrated lesson plans to provide better support for students with ASD in the general education setting.

Panel J

KC 2259

Technology Considerations

Facilitators: Dr. Lindsay Ellis &
Dr. Shinian Wu

Caitlin Fields

'The Effects of Screen-Time upon Developing Young Minds'

This study addresses how an increase in screen time on young children affects their development. Research consulted considered brain function, behavior, learning, physical and social consequences, and how screens change how children now play. Specifically, articles assessed children who are under five years old, an age when human brains are growing the most and absorbing new information. The findings suggest that while certain forms of screen time can be beneficial if educational and limited, most often technology has negative impacts upon children's development. The negative impacts consist of a higher rate of obesity due to sedentary behavior, overstimulation which can lead to brain development issues, behavioral issues, and a sense of dependency upon screens. Research around this topic is important as technology throughout childhood has implications, and most often parents and educators may not be informed on how to properly manage screen devices within adolescents' early years of life.

Reagan Lyerly

'From Fantasy to Reality: Exploring Video Game Dialogues and How They Enhance Social Skills'

Video games, as a modern form of narrative expression, can offer interactive stories that encourage players to engage in dialogues with characters created by each game's Narrative Designers—allowing players to experiment with different social behaviors in low-risk environments. This presentation explores how games such as *Night in the Woods*, *Stardew Valley*, and *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* can function as tools for social learning by enabling players to mimic conversations, practice conflict resolution, and build empathy. In addition, the dialogue patterns that enable these changes will be examined for the aim of replicating the results of players' positive social adaptations, ultimately highlighting the potential for video games to be used as intentional tools for real-world social development.

Julia Regan

'The Paradox of Technology in Education: Navigating the Benefits & Cognitive Challenges for ELLs'

This research investigates the complex influence of technology in educational environments. It analyzes how technology supports English Language Learners (ELLs), while simultaneously assessing possible long-term impacts on cognitive skills such as language acquisition. While technology offers opportunities for personalized learning experiences for ELL students, findings indicate that technology can also negatively impact attention, memory, and overall social development. Meta-analyses and peer-reviewed databases provide a detailed picture of this complex problem, revealing how harmful cognitive impacts may be prevented while also determining how technology might be used to promote educational advancement. In offering guidance on how to best utilize technology in learning environments, this thesis provides insights that could guide future research, policy-making, and pedagogical decisions to better support ELLs in their language learning journeys and ensure their cognitive well-being in the digital age.

Panel K

KC 2266

Cultural Language & Environment

Facilitators: Mr. Roy Black &
Dr. Brian Deyo

Kaeli Arceo

'Reciprocity in Indigenous Environmental Literature: Challenging Western Anthropocentric Perspectives'

By examining the novel *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, the values of reciprocity, respect, stewardship, and responsibility towards the environment help show the Indigenous perspectives of human-environmental relationships. The value of reciprocity challenges perspectives of the relationship between the human and nonhuman in Western anthropocentric ideals, which tend to emphasize exploitation, capitalism, and power in contrast to the Indigenous values. My research addresses the difference of human-environmental relationships portrayed in *Braiding Sweetgrass* with Anthropocentric concepts and beliefs to expose how, specifically, individually adopting the value of reciprocity strengthens relationships with nature and within communities instead of destroying the opportunity for a sustainable future. In context with the climate change crisis, it is important to adopt the value of reciprocity to empower the environment with agency to combat Western anthropocentric resistance.

Raechel Dunne

'Interconnectedness & Interrelationality: Ojibwemowin Emphases & English Shortcomings'

This presentation analyzes the Ojibwe language (also known as Ojibwemowin) and philosophy about interconnectedness between people and the environment. The linguistic structure of Ojibwemowin promotes love and reciprocity for the land, which English lacks, and suggests where the English language falls short in conveying the same sense of interconnectedness. By analyzing Ojibwe grammatical structures and verb tenses, the importance of interconnectedness is highlighted on a linguistic level. Indigenous knowledge is also explored from literature on community-based research of Anishinaabeg (First People) tribes. Results conclude that the English language is largely centered around dominance of the land's natural resources and separation from nature, compared to Indigenous views of interconnectivity between humans and care for the environment. By addressing these shortcomings, English-speakers can reframe their mindset to better coexist with their environment.

Evelyn Zenovia

'Japanese Culture Erasure through Translation'

Many words and concepts do not translate easily from one language to another due to cultural differences. This study focuses on inquiring what specific words and concepts cannot translate well and what culture this erases, if any truly do. Additionally, I investigate machine translations (MT) to see if translations through technology offer better results in regards to both accuracy in vocabulary and cultural translation. In order to research this topic, I chose to focus on scholarly articles related to both MT and cultural language, with an emphasis upon Japanese translations in particular. The findings revealed that MTs have advanced enough to be more accurate, but still struggle to understand particular cultural words and concepts, with formalities in Japanese proving the major culprit of mistranslation. This research is important because it highlights a major problem in translation that needs to be focused upon heavily.

Panel L

KC 2270

Literary Philosophy

Facilitators: Dr. Corinna McLeod & Dr. Tierney Powell

Benjamin Nadeau

'Re-Reading the Classics: The Challenges of Analyzing Ancient Literature'

It is often said that "the author is dead," and for Ancient Greek drama, the authors have been dead for centuries. However, their works persist, as do various interpretations of them, often shaped by contemporary political and social perspectives. When analyzing plays by Aeschylus and Euripides, it is tempting to approach them through a modern lens. Yet examining the historical and political context in which the authors wrote and their relationship with the original audience remains vital. I illustrate how readers interpret texts personally but highlight the challenges of applying contemporary worldviews, such as feminism, to works written thousands of years ago. Though valid, such interpretations must be approached with nuance. My thesis critiques New Historicism and explores how literature from the distant past remains relevant today.

Crispin Raisler

'Renaissance Humanism & the Birth of Alienation: *Hamlet* as an Ideological Crisis'

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* stages the ideological contradictions of Renaissance humanism, revealing its limitations through the prince's alienation. The play rejects the idea that humanist education and reason provide moral clarity or agency, presenting a world in which the pursuit of knowledge produces uncertainty and despair. Hamlet's education has not prepared him for the material realities of Denmark, trapping him in a world where he has little agency. Like Senecan tragedy, *Hamlet* exposes the instability of individuals within larger systems of power that impose ideology and preconfigure human nature, portraying agency as an illusion. Thus, *Hamlet* anticipates a broader literary tradition concerned with alienation—one that persists in later works and continues to shape contemporary discussions of subjectivity and power..

Lyra Starks

'Walking Away from Omelas'

"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" by Ursula K. Le Guin is an award-winning short story that introduces readers to a moral situation with no one "correct" answer. Scholarship suggests that Le Guin's Omelas portrays a Taoist approach to the unapproachability of modern morality and the seemingly dogmatic rejection of alternate individual ethics. Using the published prefaces referencing inspirations of "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," Le Guin's self-described Taoist influence in her writings, and additional critical articles, my analysis will highlight how Omelas proposes that we walk away from differing individual ethics rather than attempting to influence others.

Honoring Student Writing in the Persuasive and Personal Essay, Poetry, Fiction, & Drama

Held in Conjunction with the Departments of Classics & Writing

Named in honor of former department member E. William Oldenburg, this annual contest offers GVSU students first-place prizes of $100, second-place prizes of $75, and third-place prizes of $50 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, 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 entry itself.
- Entries are submitted via the English Department website.

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 (104A STU). Entries are accepted online through the English department website.

The Robert C. Chamberlain Scholarship

A Tuition Scholarship for Junior English Majors Demonstrating Excellence in Writing

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.

The Gilbert R. and Patricia K. Davis Endowed Merit Scholarship

A Merit Scholarship for Full- or Part-Time Junior and Senior English Majors

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

Each student must submit:

- An essay of up to 1000 words explaining why the applicant chose to major in English.

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

Eligibility Requirements
- 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

Application Requirements
Each student must provide answers to the following questions:
- Are you the first person in your immediate family to pursue a college degree (neither parent/guardian(s) has a four-year degree)?
- 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.

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

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

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.

Robert Franciosi American Literature Scholarship

A Scholarship Created to Assist English Majors who Express Interest in American Literature

Eligibility Requirements
- Applicants must be accepted for or currently enrolled at Grand Valley State University;
- Applicants must be an undergraduate junior or senior enrolled full-time or part-time with a major in English with Language & Literature or Secondary Education emphasis;
- Applicants must be a resident of Michigan;
- Applicants must have completed 30 credit hours at GVSU with a 3.0 or higher cumulative GPA;
- Applicants must be meeting satisfactory academic progress (https://www.gvsu.edu/financialaid/satisfactory-academic-progress-sap-17.htm).
- Preference will be given to students who demonstrate an interest in American Literature.
- Financial need may be considered and will be demonstrated by the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Application Requirements
- Please describe in 1,000 words or less your experience studying American Literature and why you feel it has been valuable.