



Adaptability is Key!

The School of Arts and Letters 1st Virtual Interdisciplinary Faculty Conference

Friday, March 19, 2021

Schedule for Virtual Sessions

8:45 a.m. – 9 a.m. Opening Remarks

Session 1 9 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. – Paper Session

“Shakespeare’s Weird Fairies”

A 1611 theater-goer saw “fairies” in *Macbeth*; longstanding conflation of fairies and devils lie behind Shakespeare’s witches. The author will discuss the equation of fairies and witches in the source material for *Macbeth*, the conflation of fairies and witches in the complex and varied fairy-lore in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the witch-like qualities of Shakespeare’s more clearly defined fairies in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Benita Muth, Department of English

“Neither White nor Black: Miscegenation and Identity in *Cane* and *Absalom, Absalom!*”

So-called “invisible mulatto” characters like Paul Johnson in Toomer’s *Cane* and Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* not only serve as illustrations of the meaninglessness of race, but also as metaphors for the unavoidable and ultimately self-destructive identity crisis to be suffered by any community that insists upon placing one group of its members above another. Mixed-race characters from these books symbolize the self-destructive identity crises to be suffered by hegemonic societies.

Clay Morton, Department of English

“An Oleander Wall around Me”: Thwarted Fantasies of Power in Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*

In Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*, Eleanor’s fantasies offer subversive possibilities of potentially dangerous female power. Although *The Haunting of Hill House* is ostensibly a ghost story complete with spectral messages written in blood and unseen hands jangling door knobs in the night, Jackson’s focus on storytelling—the characters’ penchant for making up stories about themselves and each other and what’s going on around them—creates the psychological horror in the novel. Most scholarship foregrounds Eleanor’s relationship with her mother and the flights of imagination that cast Eleanor as a character in a fairy tale while ignoring the central role Eleanor’s fantasies of power play in the novel.

Lorraine Dubuisson, Department of English

“The Nominal Phrase in Ikyausi”

Linguistic treatments of the nominal phrase (NP) in Bantu languages have traditionally focused almost exclusively upon the historical and morphosemantic characteristics of the nominal class system and the accompanying (pre)prefixes and corresponding concords for other lexical categories. The present study builds upon previous work by Spier and introduces the first formal discussion and treatment of the NP in Ikyausi, an underdocumented South Sabi linguistic variety spoken in the Republic of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Troy Spier, Department of English

Session 2 10:30 a.m. 11:15 a.m. – Paper Session

“Entering the Age of the Autonomous Individual: Post-World War II American Thought”

In the years following World War II, a broad-based body of evidence suggests that Americans began to take the autonomous individual as the basic unit of social concern and posited the notion that individuals ought to be free to determine their own self-constructed identities and lifestyles, regardless of the cultural group that they were born into. The author will explore how the post war focus on the autonomous individual manifested itself in American life, including Cold War concerns that rested on a visceral fear of totalitarianism.

Robert Burnham, Department of History

“EPE v. TCP”: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Middle Georgia in the 1990s

The sacred ancestral heartland of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation was under attack in the 1990s. Policymakers at the state and local level had determined that the ideal path for the Fall Line Freeway should pass perilously close to the boundary of Ocmulgee National Monument, through sites which, while admittedly dimly understood, were clearly significant to regional Native communities. Determined local activists joined forces with the rejuvenated Muscogee (Creek) Nation to prevent the road’s construction, and ended up creating something of a legal novelty, the largest Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) in the eastern United States. This paper uses archival and published sources to explore the connections between the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and its ancestral home at Ocmulgee in the 1990s.

Matt Jennings, Department of History

Session 3 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Performance

“New Musical Directions”

The presentation will include works from the early to late Romantic era by Jules Massenet and Robert Schumann, jazz standard tunes, and original compositions. Since the onset of Covid-19, music has been going in a new direction by employing many multi-media platforms. The performance will present utilizing a mix of pre-recorded tracks, video editing techniques, recording studio works, and live performances. The theme of the performance is to interweave the music from various musical styles from different periods into jazz style.

Patrick Brown and Christian Kim, Department of Media, Culture and the Arts

Session 4 12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. Paper Session

“Because Stone Cold Said So”: The Role of Narrative Function and Rhetorical Expertise in the Changing Dynamics of Professional Wrestling

This paper examines professional wrestling to illustrate the role of narrative function and rhetorical expertise in the producer/consumer dynamic. The author will argue that companies like WWE made a strategically powerful shift in the focus of their entertainment products in order to reposition their own rhetorical expertise vis-à-vis a growing “smart” audience.

Christian Norman, Department of Media, Culture and the Arts

“Breakdown to Breakthrough: An autoethnography of overcoming burnout as a Black female academic with self-compassion”

Black women academics (BWA) use the widely cited “outsider-within” metaphor to document the implicit bias experienced in the academy (Collins, 1999; 2000). The metaphor refers to the detrimental emotional effects of white supremacy and sexism within the Black community. The author offers a reflective autoethnography to document how she experiences burnout and uses self-compassion to overcome its effects. The author aims to provide insight into the academy's outsider-within positionality's negative emotional ramifications and provide tangible coping mechanisms for other BWA who may be experiencing burnout.

LaVette Burnette, Department of Media, Culture and the Arts

“Model” Behavior: Has Fashion Adapted to Inclusivity?

This presentation considers the following question: has the fashion industry adapted to a “model” of inclusivity, particular in terms of inclusion of queer and trans models? Surveying the rarified world of high fashion and other more “down-market” sectors of the industry, the author offers a brief history of queer and trans models through the twentieth century and into the present and interrogates the specific nature of homophobia and transphobia in the industry, noting significant changes over the past few decades, as apparent levels of acceptance for LGBTQI models has varied.

Loretta Clayton, Office of Graduate Studies

Session 5 2 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Panel Session

“The New Classroom: Returning to In-person Instruction During a Pandemic”

Returning to campus for the fall 2020 semester was disconcerting for faculty, staff, and students. As teaching faculty, we found ourselves in unfamiliar locations with unfamiliar restrictions on how we could interact with each other. Obviously, these restrictions were necessary for safety reasons, given the transmissibility of COVID-19, but that awareness did not erase the frustration of having to abandon teaching strategies and practices that had proven effective in the past. This paper will be a reflective presentation on how the professor attempted to adapt his traditional approach to teaching English to the new spaces and behaviors necessitated by the most recent pandemic.

Nathanael Gilbert, Department of English

“MGA Faculty Perceptions of Internationalization Pre- and Post-COVID”

This panel will discuss their research on MGA faculty perceptions of international activities as reported in 2020. A survey, based on an instrument developed by Dr. John Criswell, examined faculty members’ perceptions of institutional support for internationalization and financial support for internationalization and how those perceptions varied with the faculty members’ experiences and characteristics. Panelists will outline their research methods, showcase their data, and discuss what they know so far about the effects of the pandemic on internationalization in higher education.

John Girard, Department of Information Technology; Laura E. Thomason, Department of English; and Chris Tsavatewa, Office of Institutional Research and Data Strategy

Session 6 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Paper Session

“Oh the Inhumanity! Man as Monster”

The idea that heroic characters in fantasy, horror, and other speculative fiction often have characteristics of the monsters they fight is nothing new. Panelists will explore these characteristics by examining the history of Superman in relation to his alien (*i.e.*, monstrous) nature, as well as how Joe Hill’s horror story “Abraham’s Boys,” James S.A. Corey’s *Expanse* series and others frequently position the inhuman against the human in order to explore aspects about humanity and human nature. They will also explore this type of monstrous human savior in works such as *The Walking Dead* and the genre of grim dark fantasy.

Lisa Wenger Bro, Department of English; Mert Gareis, Department of English; and Crystal O'Leary-Davidson, Department of English