



The purpose of this conference is to highlight and enhance the contributions that humanities education makes to personal well being, responsible citizenship, and social justice.

Why the Humanities:

Answers from the Cognitive and Neurosciences

July 9-12, 2015

Kent State Hotel and Conference Center



COLLEGE OF
ARTS AND
SCIENCES

HUMANITIES | SOCIAL SCIENCES | NATURAL SCIENCES



Ohio
Humanities

Why the Humanities:

Answers from the Cognitive and Neurosciences

Recent studies in the cognitive and neurosciences indicate how humanities education can develop certain key cognitive and emotional capabilities that are essential not only for personal well being but also for responsible citizenship and social justice.

This conference will demonstrate how engagement with the humanities can develop capabilities such as the following:

- *Empathy*, the ability to feel what others are feeling
- *Mind Reading*, the ability to understand the thoughts and intentions of others
- *Metacognition*, the ability to monitor and regulate one's own perceptions and judgments of others
- *Bias Correction*, the ability to compensate for distortions in one's judgments of others
- *Self-knowledge*, the ability to recognize troublesome traits or motives in oneself
- *Self-other overlap recognition*, the ability to apprehend similarities between oneself and others who appear very different from oneself
- *Moral Judgment*, the ability to form accurate and fair assessments of oneself and of others

Conference Schedule

Thursday, July 9, 2015

- 4:30-6:00 Registration
- 5:30-6:00 Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 6:00-7:00 **Plenary Session**
 "Neither Immersion nor Distraction: How We Engage the Arts"
 Gabrielle Starr, Professor of English and Sheryl Kushner Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, New York University
- 7:00-9:00 Reception

Friday, July 10, 2015

- 7:30-9:00 Breakfast Buffet and Registration
- 9:00-10:15 **Concurrent Sessions**
 A. Teacher Workshop: "Encouraging Empathy through Immersion Reading"
 Suzanne Keen, Professor of English and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Washington and Lee University
 B. Developing Key Cognitive Capabilities through Literary Study
 1. "Great Expectations and the Prospective Brain," Maria K. Bachman
 2. "'Some Powerful Rankling Passion': An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Emotion Regulation Strategies in Joanna Baillie's Passion Plays," M. Soledad Caballero and Aimee Knusky
 3. "Theory of Mind and Feminist Dystopian Fiction," Barbara Simerka
 C. Promoting Peace and Justice in History and Economics Courses
 1. "Historical Perspective and Empathy in the Undergraduate History Classroom," Elizabeth Smith-Pryor
 2. "Why the 'History' in my 'History of Violence' Class Still Matters: Illumination and Justification from New Developments in Behavioral, Cognitive and Neurological Sciences," Daniel Thiery
 3. "A Role for the Humanities in Economics Courses and Discourses," Eric Touya
- 10:15-10:30 Break
- 10:30-11:30 **Plenary Session**
 "Indirect Communication: Artistic Literature as a Social Influence that Enables People to Be Themselves"
 Keith Oatley, Professor of Psychology and Human Development, University of Toronto
- 11:30-12:00 Break

Conference Schedule

Friday, July 10, 2015 (continued)

12:00-1:00	<p>Plenary Session</p> <p>“Life and Reading: Wayfinding Cognition, Cultural Evolution, and Literary Processing”</p> <p>Nancy Easterlin, Research Professor of English, University of New Orleans</p>
1:00-2:00	<p>Lunch</p>
2:00-3:15	<p>Concurrent Sessions</p> <p>A. Teacher Workshop: “Taking the Perspective of Problematic Students,”</p> <p>Hunter Gehlbach, Associate Professor of Education, Harvard University</p> <p>B. Fostering Empathy through Literature</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “Engagement with Popular Young Adult Fiction Influences Empathy,” Louise Freeman2. “‘Taking Refuge in How’: Empathic Mirroring in <i>The Bluest Eye</i>,” Kay Satre3. “Evil and Empathy: Supervillain’s Origins and Imagining Pain,” Valentino Zullo <p>C. Cognitive Functions of Narrative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “Toward a Narrative-Based Pedagogy,” Collin Bjork2. “Hands of Gods: The Narrative Dilemma of Overdetermined Agency,” Eric Luttrell3. “Capgras Delusion, Narrative Selves, Ethics, and Tragedy,” David Palmer
3:15-3:30	<p>Break</p>
3:30-4:30	<p>Plenary Session</p> <p>“Literature and Theory of Mind: Reading Habits and Moral Judgments”</p> <p>David Comer Kidd, PhD Candidate, The New School</p>
4:30-5:00	<p>Break</p>
5:00-6:00	<p>Plenary Session</p> <p>“Empathy and Immersion Reading”</p> <p>Suzanne Keen, Professor of English and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Washington and Lee University</p>
6:00-7:30	<p>Reception</p>
6:45-8:00	<p>Guided Tour of May 4 Memorial and Visitors Center</p>

Conference Schedule

Saturday, July 11, 2015

7:30-9:00 Breakfast Buffet

9:00-10:15 **Concurrent Sessions**

A. Teacher Workshop: "Experience, Narration, Analysis: Gwendolyn Brooks's 'The rites for Cousin Vit'"

Nancy Easterlin, Research Professor of English, University of New Orleans

B. Promoting Empathy and Solidarity through Writing

1. "Prompting Student Empathy: Content, Relations, and Writing Pedagogy," Eric Leake
2. "Writing and Culture: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Embracing the 'We,'" Mica Hall

C. Transforming Ableist Cognition through Disability Studies in Literature

1. "A Cognitive Approach to Blindness and Life-Writing," René Harrison
2. "Empathetically Interrogating Ideologies: Transformations Promising Social Justice," Rachel Mazique

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-11:30 **Plenary Session**

"Theory of Mind In the Classroom"

Lisa Zunshine, Bush-Holbrook Professor of English, University of Kentucky

11:30-12:00 Break

12:00-1:00 **Plenary Session**

"Approaching Literature Scientifically: Is It Still Literary?"

David Miall, Professor Emeritus of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta

1:00-2:00 Lunch

2:00-3:15 **Concurrent Sessions**

A. Teacher Workshop: "Reading to Live Many Lives and to Understand Other Minds,"

Keith Oatley, Professor of Psychology and Human Development, University of Toronto

B. Promoting Solidarity through the Humanities

1. "Addressing the Humanistic Needs of Teacher Candidates: Helping the Teacher Help the Student," Rebecca Chism
2. "Solidarity: A Key Word in Allende's Social Experiment," Amado J. Lascar
3. "Christina Rossetti's Environmentalist Reconceptualization of the Revelation," Todd O. Williams

C. Moral Development through the Humanities

1. "Reading for Justice: Bioethics and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*," Donald Beecher
2. "A Sino-Jewish Encounter: A Humanitarian Fantasy," Haiyan Lee
3. "Beyond Bystander Status: Re-claiming Empathy and Engagement in the Face of Genocidal Violence," Roderic L. Owen

Conference Schedule

Saturday, July 11, 2015 (continued)

- 3:15-3:30 Break
- 3:30-4:30 **Plenary Session**
"Social Perspective-Taking"
Hunter Gehlbach, Associate Professor of Education, Harvard University
- 4:30-5:00 Break
- 5:00-6:00 **Plenary Session**
"Interdisciplinary Research and the Value of Literary Study:
Neuroscience and the Humanities"
Natalie Phillips, Assistant Professor of English, Purdue University
- 6:00-7:00 Reception
- 7:00 **Banquet**
"Advancing the Humanities with the Cognitive and Neurosciences"
Mark Bracher, Professor of English, Kent State University

Sunday, July 12, 2015

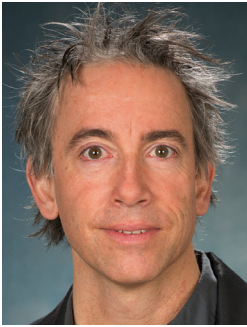
- 7:30-9:00 Breakfast Buffet
- 9:00-10:15 **Concurrent Sessions**
 - A. Teacher Workshop: "Aesthetic Issues: Empirical Answers"
David Miall, Professor Emeritus of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta
 - B. Developing the Cognitive Bases for Social Justice in Literature Classes
 1. "'Faulty' Stereotypes: New Forms of Assessment in the Multi-Ethnic Literature Classroom," Mayuri Deka
 2. "Understanding the Native American Experience: Correcting Faulty Person-Schemas," Dustin Horner
 3. "Enhancing Social Cognition and Promoting Social Justice: Teaching Literature in the Developmental Classroom," April Mason
 - C. Fostering Critical Thinking through the Humanities
 1. "Empathy's Contribution to Critical Thinking," Kevin Cutright
 2. "Critical Thinking as a Tool for Meta-Cognition and Improved Decision-Making: A Case Study in Evolutionary Epistemology from a NC Correctional Institute," Joseph Osei
 3. "Interpretation and Scientific Method: A Unity of Purpose and Process," Brad Sullivan

Conference Schedule

Sunday, July 12, 2015 (continued)

- 10:15-10:30 Break
- 10:30-11:30 **Plenary Session**
 “Science of Storytelling”
 Frederick Luis Aldama, Arts and Humanities Distinguished Professor of English and
 University Distinguished Scholar, The Ohio State University
- 11:30-12:00 Moving Forward: Open Discussion
- 12:00-1:00 Box Lunch

Featured Speakers



Frederick Luis Aldama

Arts & Humanities Distinguished Professor at Ohio State University

He is the author of many books, including *Why the Humanities Matter*, that explore literature and culture from a cognitive perspective.



Nancy Easterlin

Research Professor of English at New Orleans University

She is the author of several books, including *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation*, employing cognitive and neuroscience in the analysis of literature.



Hunter Gehlbach

Associate Professor of Education at Harvard University

The author of numerous articles, he is an expert on the crucial social-cognition capability of perspective taking, on pedagogical strategies for developing it, and on designing questionnaires to measure this and other capabilities of social cognition.



Suzanne Keen

Professor of English and Dean at Washington and Lee University

She has conducted empirical research on how reading novels can activate and enhance empathy, sympathy, and other emotions and is the author of *Empathy and the Novel*, several other books, and numerous articles.

Featured Speakers



David Comer Kidd

PhD Candidate in Psychology at The New School for Social Research

His dissertation, the results of which were published last fall in a widely read and discussed article in *Science*, found that reading literary texts enhances people's ability to infer other people's mental states.



David Miall

Professor of English at the University of Alberta

He has conducted numerous empirical studies of literary reception and is the author of *Literary Reading: Empirical and Theoretical Studies*, in which he explains how reading literature can change readers' capabilities and habits of cognition and feeling.



Keith Oatley

Novelist and Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Toronto

Among his many publications is *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction*, in which he offers empirically based explanations of how reading literature can increase empathy and other elements of emotional intelligence.

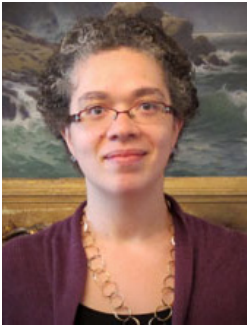


Natalie Phillips

Assistant Professor of English at Michigan State University

She is co-founder of the Digital Humanities and Literary Cognition Lab, which uses neuroscientific tools, such as fMRI and eye tracking, to explore the cognitive dynamics of literary reading.

Featured Speakers



G. Gabrielle Starr

Professor of English and Dean at New York University

She pursues research in neuroaesthetics, a relatively new field of inquiry that uses the tools of cognitive neuroscience to explore the contours of aesthetic experience. Her most recent book is *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience*.



Lisa Zunshine

Bush-Holbrook Professor of English at the University of Kentucky

She is the author of many articles and books, including *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*, which explains how specific literary passages induce and possibly train readers to infer others' mental states.

Kent State University, Kent State, and KSU are registered trademarks and may not be used without permission.



This conference is made possible, in part, by the Ohio Humanities, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this conference do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Generous support is also being provided by Kent State University's College of Arts & Sciences, College of Education, Health, and Human Services, the departments of English, History, Modern and Classical Language Studies, Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology, and the Institute for Applied Linguistics.