



The College of Arts and Sciences

New Faculty
2013-2014

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Department of

Biological Sciences



Dr. Wendy Beane

Dr. Wendy S. Beane is a stem cell and regeneration research scientist with a B.S. in Biomedical Sciences from Averett University. She received her Ph.D. from Duke University in Developmental, Cellular and Molecular Biology, studying patterning and cell movements during development using the urchin embryos as a model system. During this time she helped to annotate the Sea Urchin Genome, investigated the role of small GTPases in gene regulatory networks during early cleavage-stage cell specification, mentored ten students and cemented her love of teaching. She went on to do an NRSA Postdoctoral Fellowship, first at the Forsyth Institute at Harvard University and later at Tufts University, where she mentored five students and studied the regenerative powers of the planarian flatworm. Her work uncovered a role for membrane voltage during regeneration, which is vital for deciding the identity of new tissues and for remodeling pre-existing ones.

Dr. Beane's research at Western Michigan University will expand the knowledge of how regeneration works by investigating the question of regenerative shape. Her postdoctoral work established planaria as the first model for adult stem cell-mediated shape regulation. Her research program will focus on two main areas: (1) determining the signaling pathways that control regenerative shape, and (2) discovering how tissues decide they have reached their target shape and should stop regenerating.

Department of
History

Dr. David Benac



Dr. David Benac earned a B.A. in History from Michigan State University (1995), an M.A. from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis in Public History (1997) and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Missouri (2003). He has taught at Southeastern Louisiana University from 2003 and developed its Public History program. He joins the Department of History at Western Michigan University as an associate professor of Public History and will be responsible for coordinating the department's public history major.

Dr. Benac is the author of numerous reviews, articles, commissioned reports for state and federal agencies and is the recipient of numerous awards and grants for his teaching, research and public history initiatives. His first book, *Conflict in the Ozarks: Hill Folk, Industrialists, and Government in the Courtois Hill* (Truman State Press, 2010), traces the rise and fall of the timber industry and the interplay and conflicts that developed between residents, lumber companies and the government. His next major project is a comparative study of lumber towns in different regions of the United States with a focus on questions of town planning and sustainability and continues his research interest on both the built and natural environments and how people shape and are shaped by them.

Department of
Statistics



Dr. Hyunkeun Cho

Dr. Hyunkeun Cho was born in Chungju, South Korea. He received two bachelor's degrees in Business Administration from Ajou University, South Korea and Mathematics from The State University of New York at Stony Brook. After earning an M.S. in Statistics at Stony Brook, he joined the Department of Statistics at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a graduate student in 2008 and completed his Ph.D. in Statistics in 2013.

Dr. Cho's main research interests are in correlated data analysis, model selection, low rank approximation, generalized method of moments, panel data analysis, personalized medicine, and statistical consulting. His Ph.D. thesis topics were model selection for correlated data and moment selection from high-dimensional moments. These have wide applications in public health research and economics. His current research intends to develop the personalized sub-grouping method which identifies a subset of patients with certain characteristics who could benefit from the assigned treatment.

Dr. Cho is also interested in applied and interdisciplinary research which led him to perform statistical consulting on more than 30 projects in many areas, such as clinical trials, biology, dietetics, transportation, environmental science, survey data and business in the Illinois Statistical Office. Consulting enabled Dr. Cho to apply statistical tools in novel applications and has enhanced his experience and ability for solving real world problems and has also trained him to collaborate with researchers and scientists.

Dr. Cho is warm-hearted, approachable, eager to help students, enthusiastic and creative, and hopes that his lively sense of humor keeps students interested and engaged.

Department of
Philosophy

Mr. Peter Distelzweig



Peter M. Distelzweig received a B.A.—summa cum laude—in philosophy from the University of Notre Dame and an M.S. in Physics Education from Eastern Michigan University. He did his doctoral work at the University of Pittsburgh in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, where he also received an M.A.

His research interests center on metaphysical, epistemological, and methodological issues raised by the history of science—especially in the early modern and ancient periods. In his dissertation Distelzweig traces the relations between and limitations of mechanical and teleological explanation in René Descartes and anatomists William Harvey and Hieronymus Fabricius ab Aquapendente.

Distelzweig's "The Use of *Usus* and the Function of *Functio*: Teleology and its Limits in Descartes' Physiology" will be in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. Distelzweig is coeditor of an upcoming volume on early modern natural philosophy and medicine, to which he contributes a chapter on the nature and limits of mechanics and mechanism in William Harvey's anatomical project. His "Fabricius's Galeno-Aristotelian Teleomechanics of Muscle" will appear in an edited volume on the life sciences in early modern philosophy (Oxford University Press). He was a primary organizer of the *Medicine, Philosophy and the 'Scientific Revolution' Initiative*, a multi-year collaborative initiative hosted at the University of Pittsburgh. Distelzweig also works in general philosophy of science and ancient philosophy. His "The Intersection of Mathematical and Natural Science: The Subordinate Sciences in Aristotle" recently appeared in *Apeiron*.

Distelzweig enjoys teaching a wide range of courses in the history of philosophy, introductory philosophy courses and courses in the philosophy of science.

Department of
**World Languages
and Literatures**



Dr. Wafa Hassan

Dr. Wafa Hassan is a graduate of the George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development with a focus on Second Language/Bilingual Education. Prior to joining Western Michigan University, Dr. Hassan was an Arabic language faculty member at Michigan State University and the director of outreach and K-12 initiatives for the Arabic Language Flagship Program since 2007. She is currently overseeing the development of the Flagship standards and thematic based Arabic curriculum for secondary schools. The curriculum is being used by over ninety schools in the United States. Her research interests are focused on best practices and teaching foreign languages, motivation and language learning and language teacher preparation. She is a co-author of the ACTFL National Standards for Learning Arabic as a Foreign Language and author of a published book titled *Inclusion of ELL with Special Needs in General Education*.

Dr. Hassan has extensive experience in teacher preparation. She is a well-known foreign language teacher trainer. She has been the director of the STARTALK Arabic teacher program for the past seven years. She conducts professional development workshops for teachers of Arabic as a foreign language on a regular basis in the United States and internationally. These workshops include many subjects such as pedagogy and assessment. She has also worked internationally and has recently been invited to train teachers in Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar.

Dr. Hassan's assignment at MSU as an outreach director enabled her to develop a great network with K-12 schools and higher education institutions in Michigan, neighboring states and nationwide. All her previous positions enabled her to develop a unique, strong K-6 academic background in teaching, research, curriculum development, and teacher-training. She is eager to put these qualifications to use for the benefit of the WMU World Languages and Literatures program. Dr. Hassan is also looking forward to reach out to other colleges and departments at WMU. She is enthusiastic to extend her outreach to the community and visit schools in Kalamazoo to orient students of the importance of foreign languages and its impact on their future and the economic needs of the United States.

Dr. Hassan is looking forward to employing her research skills to enrich the field of teaching foreign language with best practices and new innovative pedagogical strategies that keeps students engaged in using their language skills as lifelong learners and global citizens of the world.

Department of
Psychology

Dr. Douglas Johnson



Dr. Douglas A. Johnson is a new assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at Western Michigan University. Prior to this position, he taught and developed college courses on introductory psychology, instructional design, behavioral training/teaching strategies, professional and career development, social psychology, statistics, applied behavior analysis, college teaching techniques, educational psychology and industrial/organizational psychology. He has also worked as an international consultant for improving organizational performance and has provided services such as instructional design, training design/development, computer-based instruction, performance management, behavioral systems analysis, and managerial training materials on topics such as incentives, feedback and employee motivation. He has published seven peer-reviewed journal articles, two books and is currently developing a third book for publication. He has delivered 24 presentations and workshops at various professional conferences. He earned a B.S. from Central Michigan University in 2001, an M.A. from WMU in 2005, and a Ph.D. from WMU in 2009.

School of Communication



Dr. Adam Kahn

Dr. Adam S. Kahn recently completed his Ph.D. in communication at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, where he also earned an M.A. in communication. He also holds a B.S. in computer science, a B.A. in history, and an M.A. in media studies, all from Stanford University. He is joining the Western Michigan University School of Communication as an assistant professor.

Dr. Kahn studies the social and psychological effects of computer-mediated communication and human-computer interaction. His dissertation examined the development of transactive memory systems (how groups learn and coordinate expertise) in video game teams. In it, he surveyed over 18,000 players of the video game League of Legends (one of the largest surveys in the history of the field of communication) and matched the survey data to server data provided by the game company. In addition to his work with video games, he has also conducted research on designing group-based exams in large lecture courses. With his arrival, the School of Communication will be expanding its research space and adding multiple high-end gaming computers for School of Communication faculty and graduate student use.

Dr. Kahn's work has appeared in the journal "Human-Computer Interaction" and the edited volumes of the Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies and Postsecondary Play. He regularly presents his research at the annual conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), where he has won a Top 2 Student Paper Award from the Communication and Technology Division (ICA's second largest division).

In addition to his research, he is a passionate teacher. While a graduate student, he was a USC Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) Teaching Assistant Fellow and received an Award for Excellence in Teaching (given to only one graduate student per department per year). He was also named a Favorite TA by the Annenberg Student Communication Association (as voted on by the department's undergraduates). At WMU, he will teach Communication Inquiry, as well as two new courses: Communication Technology and Society and Media Processes and Effects. In the future, he hopes to add additional undergraduate and graduate courses in computer-mediated communication social media, and human-computer interaction.

Dr. Kahn will bring another new Bronco with him; his fiancée, Hillary, will be completing her M.S.W. in the WMU School of Social Work with a field placement at the WMU School of Medicine Family Clinic.

Department of
Physics

Dr. Elena Litvinova



Dr. Elena Litvinova was born in Obninsk, Russia (former Soviet Union), in a family of engineers. In 1994, Dr. Litvinova graduated from the State Technical University for nuclear power engineering in Obninsk, Russia with an M.S. in physics and engineering. After earning an M.S., Dr. Litvinova began a 3-year pre-Ph.D. program in theoretical nuclear and particle physics at Obninsk State Technical University for nuclear power engineering and was a teaching assistant.

In August 2000, Dr. Litvinova was hired as a scientist at the Institute of Physics and Power Engineering, Obninsk, Russia, where she continued her Ph.D. research project on description of low-energy dynamics of atomic nuclei. She completed her Ph.D. dissertation, *Effects of Complex Configurations and Single-Particle Continuum in Open-Shell Nuclei* and defended it in March 2003, at the Bogoliubov Laboratory of Theoretical Physics, Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, Dubna, Russia. From 2004 to 2010, she held a senior scientist position at the Institute of Physics and Power Engineering Theory Division, in Obninsk, Russia.

In 2005, Elena obtained an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship, with Professor Peter Ring as a host professor at the Technical University Munich, where she worked on the project Relativistic Quasi-Particle Time Blocking Approximation, which she completed successfully in 2007. Dr. Litvinova held post-doctoral positions at GSI Helmholtzzentrum für Schwerionenforschung, Darmstadt, and the Institut für Theoretische Physik, Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, continuing the scientific work on relativistic many-body models and their applications to nuclear structure and astrophysics. In 2009, Elena obtained the GSI Exotic Nuclei Community (GENCO) Award and GENCO Membership.

Dr. Litvinova has also served at the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams Theory Fellow at National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory (NSCL) at Michigan State University where she developed methods beyond the standard approaches in identifying high-precision solutions of the nuclear many-body problem. Dr. Litvinova also obtained a degree from the A.M. Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow, Russia, and became a member of the Russian Writers' Association.

Department of
Philosophy



Dr. Nicholas Mantegani

Dr. Nicholas Mantegani received both his B.A. and Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Texas in Austin. His primary research interests are in metaphysics and he is particularly interested in the notion of ontological commitment, the realism-nominalism debate in ontology and the methodology of theory comparison and selection (especially concerning the role of theoretical virtues, such as simplicity, in theory selection). He has related interests in the history of philosophy (specifically the early twentieth century and early modern periods), the philosophy of language and epistemology. Dr. Mantegani likes to teach a variety of courses, ranging from areas previously mentioned to courses in political philosophy and ethics.

Department of

Comparative Religion

Dr. Alisa Perkins



Dr. Alisa Perkins is a cultural anthropologist in the Department of Comparative Religion specializing in ethnography of religion and Islam in America. Dr. Perkins' current research explores the civic engagement of ethnically and racially diverse Muslim Americans in the Detroit-metro area. Her dissertation study, *From the Mosque to the Municipality: The Ethics of Muslim Space in a Michigan City* (2012), was carried out in Hamtramck between 2007-09, with support from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the National Science Foundation, and the PEO. Based on her doctoral research, the article "Negotiating Alliances: Muslims, Gay Rights, and the Christian Right in a Polish-American City" was published in the journal "Anthropology Today" (April 2010). Her forthcoming publication in *Citizenship Studies* (2014) analyzes contestations over the Islamic call to prayer in Hamtramck.

Dr. Perkins plans to carry out a new phase of ethnographic study in the metro-Detroit area that will concentrate on the development of religious networks bringing together African American, Arab American and South Asian American Muslim populations. The future research also will include a focus on ethnically and racially diverse Muslim women's activism and leadership in communities, mosques and religious study circles. Taken as a whole, the aim of this work is to advance interdisciplinary scholarship on how religion impacts the civic engagement of immigrants and minorities; on how gender systems are preserved, challenged, or transformed in migration; and on how diverse communities living in close proximity negotiate conflicting ideas about the common good.

At Western Michigan University, Dr. Perkins is looking forward to teaching courses on Islam in America, Introduction to Islam, Religion and Gender, Immigrant Religions, Race and Religiosity, Secularism and Minority, and Religion and Culture. Before beginning her work on Islam in America, Dr. Perkins' research centered on women and gender in Muslim-majority societies, culminating in her master's level study on women's literacy and Islamic family law in Morocco. This project was supported by a Fulbright grant. Dr. Perkins earned an M.A. (2005) and a Ph.D. (2012) in anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin. She earned a B.A. in English at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT in 1996. She was born in Brooklyn, and grew up in Long Island, New York.

Environmental Studies



Dr. Brian Petersen

Dr. Brian Petersen is an assistant professor in Environmental Studies. He has an undergraduate degree in Environmental Science from the University of Idaho, two master's degrees from the University of Washington (Forest Resources and Public Administration) and a Ph.D. in Environmental Studies from the University of California Santa Cruz. He has a strong interdisciplinary background, which he uses in both his teaching and research. His research focuses on forest policy and management and on climate change adaptation to meet conservation objectives on a landscape scale. In particular, he focuses on land management in the western United States and how federal agencies and other landowners plan to adapt to climate change.

Prior to joining the faculty at Western Michigan University, Dr. Petersen had a three-year research associate position at Michigan State University where he conducted research in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy on climate change adaptation perceptions by Great Lakes resource managers. He also collaborated with representatives from two non-governmental organizations helping to design performance measures for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

In addition to research, Dr. Petersen has a strong interest in undergraduate teaching. He designed and taught a capstone course on climate change in the Environmental Studies Program and has interests in teaching courses on Sustainability Studies, Environment and Society, Environmental Policy, Political Ecology, Wilderness and Environmental Governance.

Department of

Gender and Women's Studies

Dr. Tabassum Ruby



A scholar of post-colonial theory, transnational feminism, Islam and gender, secularism and diaspora studies, Dr. Tabassum Ruby joins the faculty at Western Michigan University from Bowling Green State University, where she held an instructor position in the department of American Culture Studies and the department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Dr. Ruby received a Ph.D. in women's studies at York University in Canada in 2010. Her research examined how the project of modernity, particularly liberal-secular normative values, have shaped and informed the question of Muslim women's rights. She completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in philosophy and gender and women's studies at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Punjab, respectively. Her gender and women's studies' master's thesis explored the manner in which immigrant Muslim women construct their identities with specific reference to the hijab. For her master's of philosophy thesis, she focused on Wittgenstein's philosophy of language.

Dr. Ruby has published three articles in interdisciplinary, refereed journals and her work also has appeared in two edited volumes. Her current work nuances established narratives on Islam and gender by examining the case of the Ontario Shari'ah tribunals and then reflects on how the proposed conception of human rights ontologically and epistemologically relates to the Shari'ah laws.

Originally from Pakistan, Dr. Ruby has made her home in Canada and the United States since 1998. This global orientation has deeply informed her teaching and research, allowing her to bring a range of different perspectives and ideas to the classroom and research.

Department of

Anthropology



Dr. Sarah Schrader

Dr. Sarah Schrader is a bioarchaeologist specializing in the excavation and examination of human skeletal remains and their archaeological context. Through the analysis of human bone, Dr. Schrader addresses questions of identity and agency in ancient Nubia. Her current research is centered upon the archaeological site of Tombos, which is located at the Third Cataract of the Nile River in modern Sudan. She has spent multiple field seasons excavating at Tombos in addition to visiting several international skeletal collections to study comparative material. She uses stable isotope analysis and activity pattern analysis to elucidate what ancient Nubians were eating and what types of physical activities they were engaged in. Dr. Schrader received her Ph.D. from Purdue University in 2013, and will be a visiting instructor at Western Michigan University for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Department of
Physics

Dr. Vladimir Skokov



Dr. Vladimir Skokov was born in Saratov, Russia. He graduated from Saratov State University, Saratov, Russia, in 2002. Vladimir received his Ph.D. from Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna, Russia, in November 2006.

Dr. Skokov was a scientist at Joint Institute for Nuclear Researches, at Bogoliubov Laboratory of Theoretical Physics. From 2009 to 2011, Vladimir held a postdoctoral position at GSI Helmholtzzentrum für Schwerionenforschung, Darmstadt. His second postdoctoral position was at Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York.

Department of
Sociology



Dr. Jesse Smith

Dr. Jesse M. Smith grew up in a small town in the central region of Utah. He spent time working in and exploring Alaska in his early twenties before attending Utah Valley University as an undergraduate, where he received a bachelor's degree in psychology in 2005. He then went on to attend graduate school at the University of Colorado at Boulder where he received both an M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology. His dissertation research was based on a five year ethnography of various local atheist groups, primarily based in Colorado, but also including Utah and Texas. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, he explored a variety of issues including how atheists construct and negotiate their identities in a variety of social contexts and situations. He also examined the meaning-making processes of his research subjects, and discussed how collective identity is produced and maintained in the context of atheist groups. He is currently working on turning his dissertation—"Atheists in America: Identity, Meaning, and Movement"—into a publishable piece of public ethnography.

His broader training and research interests include sociological social psychology, qualitative/ethnographic methods, the sociology of deviance, the self and identity, and social theory. He has published his research in a variety of academic journals including the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Sociological Quarter* and *Sociology of Religion*.

Dr. Smith loves teaching sociology and working with students. He has the opportunity to teach a variety of lower and upper division courses including Introduction to Sociology the Sociology of Religion, Deviance in U.S. Society and Classical Sociological Theory. He is excited to teach his first Sociological Social Psychology course at Western Michigan University.

After spending most of his life in the Rocky Mountains, he is excited to explore Michigan and be near the lakes. Although he will miss Denver and concerts at Red Rocks, he is excited to discover Kalamazoo restaurants with his wife and enjoy the amazing Michigan summers with his miniature pincher, Lily.

Department of
Geosciences

Dr. Joyashish Thakurta



Dr. Joyashish Thakurta completed his Ph.D. at Indiana University Bloomington in 2008, on the Geochemical and Mineralogical studies of the Duke Island Ultramafic Complex in southeastern Alaska and the prospect of magmatic sulfide ore mineralizations of copper, nickel and platinum group elements associated with it. He also has master's degrees in Geology: one from the University of Wisconsin-Madison on stable isotope thermometry of granulite facies marbles in the Santa Lucia Range in the Salinian Block of California and another from Jadavpur University (India) on the origin of calc-silicate granulite facies rocks in the ultra-high temperature metamorphic belt of the Eastern Ghats, India. He completed his bachelor's degree with honors in Geology from the University of Calcutta (India).

Dr. Thakurta worked as an Exploration Geologist for an international mining company, Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold from the Oro Valley office in Arizona from 2008 to 2009. He studied porphyry-style copper and molybdenum mineralizations in granitic to intermediate plutons in southern Arizona and central Colorado. He was also a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Geological Sciences at Ohio University from 2009 to 2012 where he taught courses such as Earth Materials and Resources, Petrology, Petrography, Economic Geology and Introduction to Geology. He joined the Department of Geosciences at Western Michigan University in 2012 as a faculty specialist in Mineralogy and Petrology and has served as the director of the Economic Geology Unit of the Michigan Geological Survey since 2012.

Dr. Thakurta's primary research interests are related to the origin of mafic-ultramafic magmatic complexes and in the occurrences of sulfide mineral deposits. He is especially interested in the origin and economic importance of Ural-Alaskan type complexes and in the metallic sulfide mineralizations in the Upper Peninsula area of Michigan. He has been working on the petrogenesis and geochemical characterization of a selected group of Ural-Alaskan type complexes such as the Duke Island, Annette Island, Salt Chuck and Douglas Island Complexes. Based on his experience as an Exploration Geologist he plans to design new projects in the exploration for magmatic sulfide copper-nickel-platinum mineral deposits in the Upper Peninsula region of Michigan and for porphyry copper-molybdenum deposits in western United States.

School of
Communication



Mr. Nathan Venske

Nathan Venske is the newest addition to the School of Communication undergraduate advising unit. Nathan has an M.A. in Counseling from Oakland University and comes to Western Michigan University after working as an academic advisor at Oakland University, Nova Southeastern University and Indiana University.

Nathan passed the National Board for Certified Counselor examination in 2009. He has created and taught student success seminars in goal setting, time management and study skills. At Indiana University Nathan designed the Reaching Your Potential Seminar series consisting of topic areas in happiness, motivation and stress management.

Nathan is an award-winning academic advisor who has presented at university, state, regional and national academic advising conferences. Nathan has also spoken and consulted on happiness in the workplace with other professional organizations including the International Society for Pharmaceutical Engineering (ISPA). He is also a member of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA).



The College of Arts and Sciences represents the academic heart and liberal arts core of Western Michigan University and provides a broad range of academic programs for students. As the largest college at WMU, CAS:

- Employs more than 330 full-time faculty members
- Enrolls more than 5,000 majors and more than 1,000 graduate students across 26 departments and interdisciplinary programs
- Provides the foundation for the general education curriculum at WMU
- Teaches approximately half of all student credit hours at all WMU campuses
- Implements six strategic priorities of the college strategic plan

One of the top-100 public university in the United States, WMU is committed to being learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged. Founded in 1903, what was once Western Michigan College became Michigan's fourth public university in 1957. Today, WMU offers more than 240 academic programs to 25,000 students pursuing degrees through the doctoral level. WMU's campuses encompass more than 1,200 acres and 151 buildings, featuring some of the finest facilities in the Midwest. Its main campus is located near downtown Kalamazoo.