Dissertation Completion Fellowships Announced

The Graduate College is pleased to announce that three WMU doctoral students have been named recipients of Dissertation Completion Fellowships for the 2017–18 academic year.

The 2017–18 Dissertation Completion Fellowship recipients are as follows:

Steffany Comfort Maher – Department of English

Steffany Comfort Maher will receive a full-year fellowship for her dissertation titled, *A Critical Inquiry Approach to Teaching Young Adult Literature.* Dr. Allen Webb, Steffany’s dissertation advisor, writes that Steffany is “one of the finest doctoral students I have worked with in my 25 years at WMU,” and he concludes that her research will make critical contributions to the field of English education. The dissertation concerns pedagogical approaches to teaching literature to young adults and will take the form of a book that English teachers can purchase and that also can be used as a text book for courses that prepare students for the classroom or that can be incorporated into courses for the continuing professional. According to Dr. Webb, there are professional books about teaching literature to young adults; however, these books lack the foundation of classroom research. Steffany’s textbook for preservice teachers will draw upon an inquiry approach and will also utilize new research in critical youth studies, as well as draw upon secondary classroom settings: thus, the dissertation, and the resulting book, will coalesce in these three important intersections. Steffany is a certified secondary English teacher, with 12 years of experience in middle and high school classrooms; four years of teaching at the college level; and expertise in qualitative and classroom research. She is the recipient of several department level and Graduate College travel grants to present her work at national conferences.

Bilge N. Altay – Department of Chemical and Paper Engineering

Bilge Altay will receive a full-year fellowship for her dissertation titled *Development and Characterization of Nano Nickel-based Conductive Inks for the Flexo Printing of Printed Electronic Devices.* Her dissertation advisor, Dr. Paul Fleming, writes that she is an “outstanding student who has already made significant accomplishments in research.” Bilge’s research is partially supported by the Rossini Scholarship from the Flexographic Technical Association. Her work involves “the study of nickel, an abundant metal with high electrical conductivity. Less expensive than silver and gold, its magnetic properties open up a new class of printed electronic devices, including wireless power, electromagnetic sensors, proximity sensors and micro magnetic field sources,” writes Dr. Fleming. Her work will contribute to the quickly growing technology of Printed Electronics. Bilge is the author or co-author of 14 peer-reviewed articles and has presented her work at both national and international conference venues. She has varied professional experiences and has worked as a research associate on an NSF-funded project, as well as taught within laboratory and classroom settings. She also taught printing for the Department of Printing and Publication Technologies at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, and in the Graphic Communications Department at California Polytechnic State University, in San Luis Obispo, CA. She is an active member of the Graduate Student Association and has served as a Graduate College Graduate Ambassador.
Jason Vanfossen will receive a full-year fellowship to complete his dissertation titled *Boys On the Road: Childhood Geographies and (Auto) Mobility in Young Adult Road Novels*. Dr. Gwen Tarbox, Jason’s dissertation advisor, writes that this work “advances scholarship in the fields of children’s literature, LGBTQ studies, and disability studies.” The study works from the essential concept that the North American road trip has historically served as a rite of passage, primarily for young, white cisgender men. Jason “identifies the characteristics of literary fiction that celebrate life on the road in texts such as Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, and then considers how those characteristics have altered when they appear in contemporary novels written for young people and focused on members of underrepresented groups,” writes Dr. Tarbox. Jason is considered one of the finest teachers in the Department of English and recently was awarded the Edward Galligan Scholarship, a prestigious award given to the student who displays the most promise as a scholar working on American authors. Moreover, he is the 2017 recipient of the Gwen Raaberg Excellence in Teaching Award. His reputation has soared beyond the Department of English and beyond WMU. Jason’s road trip narrative has garnered the attention of executives at PBS, and, after a nationwide search, Jason and two other Ph.D. candidates will travel across the United States in May 2017, interviewing other Ph.D. holders who are doing innovative work in their respective fields. The documentary will air in Fall 2017, and according to Dr. Tarbox, will “bring welcome recognition to him and to Western Michigan University.”