

## Using Pop Culture to Engage Students - Panel Bios

**Lofty Durham** is an associate professor of theatre and associate director of the office of faculty development. He's been teaching in higher ed since 2003 and has won awards for his teaching, writing, and research. He is proud to be a part of both the University Center for the Humanities and the Medieval Institute.

**Denisha Griffey, M.S., Chemistry**, is the coordinator for the WIRE Youth Development Program, housed within the Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations at Western Michigan University. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry Pre-Med from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and a Master of Science in Chemistry from Tennessee State University. She began her career as an educator at Tennessee State University, as an adjunct faculty and transitioned to laboratory coordinator in the Department of Chemistry. In her current role of WIRE Coordinator, serving students ages 8-13, she develops the STEM curriculum for the WIRE Math and Science Camp and Saturday Academy enrichment programs. Currently, she is pursuing her Ph.D., in Geosciences, with the focus of engaging elementary and middle school students in the field of geosciences.

**Johnny Kreider** has been teaching and learning with students of Kalamazoo Public Schools in Kalamazoo, MI for 10 years. Currently, they are the Teacher Librarian at Loy Norrix High School. They hold a Master of Education in School Library Media from The University of West Georgia, a Bachelor of Arts in English Education from Western Michigan University, and a belief that Gen Z is changing the world for the better.

**Christopher "Mav" Maverick** teaches in the Digital Narrative and Interactive Design program. His primary research interests include issues of race, class, gender and sexuality in 20th and 21st century American popular culture, especially television, movies, professional wrestling and comic books. He is the 2018 recipient of the Lent Award for Excellence in Graduate Studies in Comics from the Popular Culture Association (PCA) and the 2021 Honorable Mention recipient for the Gilbert Seldes Prize for Public Scholarship from the Comic Studies Society (CSS). Since 2022, he has been the area chair for Eros and Pornography in Popular Culture for the PCA.

Mav holds a Ph.D. in English from Duquesne University where his dissertation work focused on depictions of gender and sexuality in 20th century superhero comics. He holds a BA in Creative Writing and Literary and Cultural Studies and a MA in Literary and Cultural Studies, both from Carnegie Mellon University. Between his undergrad and graduate education, he spent two decades as a user experience designer and information architect for a variety of companies. Mav is an avid believer in active participant observation and public scholarship and as such, he is the host of two academic podcasts, [The VoxPopcast](#) and [Oh Gosh, Oh Golly, Oh Wow](#). He has been an avid blogger and media critic since 2002. From 2008 until 2018, he wrote the webcomic Cosmic Hellcats. Mav spent several years as a semi-professional photographer and in 2006, he started an internet cult devoted to selfies. Oh yeah... and from 2003 until 2010 he competed as a professional wrestler... no really!

**Frances Vicioso** is a master facilitator, community advocate, and veteran educator with a background in

K12 education in NYC. Her roles have included Math, Science, and Technology educator, afterschool programming and quality control, and robotics coach. Her time in philanthropy has been dedicated to spreading the good word of truth telling and centering deep relationships across communities to achieve racial justice.

Frances is one of the co-directors of Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Kalamazoo, an initiative hosted by the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. Her role focuses on transformation through community empowerment, civic engagement, and policy change in the areas of Law, Economy, Separation (Housing and Education).

In 2022, she was featured in an Emerging Leader series hosted by ONEplace, a nonprofit capacity-building organization in Kalamazoo. Frances also volunteers her time on the OutFront board of directors, the KVCC Police Academy Board, and serves as the co-chair of the Kalamazoo County DEI Advisory Board.