

April 9-11, 2026



2026

Valerie Waksmunski-Starr Memorial Conference on the Liberal Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

About

The twelfth annual Valerie Waksmunski-Starr Memorial Conference on the Liberal Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (formerly the History across the Humanities) is sponsored by the Youngstown State University History Program, the Alpha Gamma Beta Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the Reeder Endowment in History, and the Darling Endowment in History.

HATH was founded by Valerie Waksmunski-Starr, a master's student in YSU's History Program (2013-2015). Valerie studied the intellectual and political history of China during the Spring and Autumn Warring States periods. During her time at YSU, Valerie was diagnosed with cancer and lost her battle on June 29, 2015, having just completed her thesis. She is greatly missed by the History faculty and by all who knew her. The conference is named in her honor.

Youngstown State University

YSU traces its origins to the Youngstown YMCA education program, which, in 1908, began offering a course in commercial law. In 1921, the YMCA educational program was renamed the Youngstown Institute of Technology. Throughout the 1920s, the YMCA added more programs, including liberal arts. In 1928, the YMCA changed the name of the school to Youngstown College and offered its first Bachelor of Arts degree two years later. Over time, the college offered more programs and finally separated from the YMCA in 1944. Thanks to rapid growth following World War II, the college was rechartered in 1954 as Youngstown University. In 1967, the institution joined the Ohio state system of higher education and became Youngstown State University. In a community devastated by deindustrialization in the late 1970s, Youngstown State University is a major force for stability in the city, the county, and the region.

Youngstown Historical Center of Industry & Labor

The Youngstown Historical Center of Industry & Labor (YHCIL), is a site of the Ohio History Connection and operated by YSU's History Program. Housed in a post-modernist structure designed by Michael Graves, YHCIL is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of labor and industrial history. The facility opened its doors in 1992 with its permanent exhibition, "By the Sweat of their Brow: Forging the Steely Valley." In January, 2010, YSU took over daily management of YHCIL. YHCIL regularly hosts public programs and temporary exhibits, including exhibits developed by students in YSU's History Program. YSU, the History Program, and YHCIL share a commitment to the local community and to engaging citizens in dialogue about relevant issues as well as providing educational opportunities and professional development for students.

All times are eastern time

Program

All sessions will be held at YHCIL

Thursday April 9			
Session Type		Presenter Names	Presentation Title
Workshop	8:30-9:30	Dawna Cerney, Joe Alberti, Rachel Faerber-Ovaska	The Geography of your AI Pedagogy
Poster Session A	9:35-9:55	Melina Mottiqua	Interpreting the Constitution or Advancing Ideology?: An Analysis on the United States Judicial Branch
		Silvana Martinez Alvarez	City of Youngstown Community Based Program: Impact on the emotional well-being and confidence through cultural and linguistic diversity?
		Grace Bishop	The Change of <i>Roe v. Wade</i>
		Elizabeth Crockett	How State Political Polarization Has Shaped U.S. Climate Mitigation Efforts in Comparison to the Federal Government
		Sonya Lenoir	Nonprofit Civic Education Programming For Youth Civic Engagement
		Lauryn Swanson	DEI Impact On College Universities
		Meygan Graff	Dealing with Mental Health behind bars: Evaluating The Impact of the Justice System on different types of Mental Health Disorders
		Meygan Graff	The Decrease of Power in the Legislative Branch Over The Years
		Ayed S. Emeeshat	Untitled Political Science Senior Capstone
		Hannah Diaz	Puerto Rico: Estado o Territorio?
		Madison Anders	Untitled Political Science Senior Capstone
Poster Session B	10:00-10:20	McKinley Fielding	Enforcement mechanisms on humanitarian violations and international courts
		Sofie Myers	Untitled Political Science Capstone
		Cameron Pykare	US Government Corruption: Why Aren't Our Leaders Held Accountable?
		Ben Davis	The Sino-American Cold War
		Brandon Tabak	National Identity and Democratization in Ukraine and Belarus
		Tamara Myers	An emotional State
		Selina R. Jones	AI versus Copyright: Artificial Intelligence copyright policies and the impact on copyright infringement of musical artists rights and streaming policies

Thursday April 9 continued

		Angelina M. Myers	Law Without Morality: A Study of How Legal Systems Define Justice When Moral Values Conflict, Evolve, or Disappear.
		Connor Hanshaw	U.S. Relations to East Asian Countries
		Camille Shelton	Untitled Political Science Capstone
		Richard Sandberg	Untitled Political Science Capstone
Paper Session: Bodies, Data & Decisions	10:30-10:59		
		Leah Webb	Why consumers don't switch to non-toxic cleaning and beauty brands
		Viktoryia Paliakovich	Multilingual Tension and Power Dynamics in Quentin Tarantino's <i>Inglourious Basterds</i> and <i>Django Unchained</i>
Panel Session & Lunch	11:30-1:00 Lunch	Jada Marsh, Brandon Evans, Megan Rowley	The Genetic Panopticon: Navigating the Ethics of Modern DNA Investigation
History Capstone Session 1	1:00-1:53		
		Rees Beckman	The Enlightenment: Natural Rights in the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions
		Michael Vinkler	The Holocaust Comes Home: A Story from the Honigman Family
		Evan Lewis	From Ragtime to Striding Rhythm: Music, Society, and Spiritual Expressions from 1899-1929
		Thomas Kempe	Echoes of the Bell Witch: Folklore, Fear, and Memory in the American South
History Capstone Session 2	2:00-3:15		
		Madison Lutz	Manufacturing the Highland Threat
		Sage Vavro	Transforming the Mahoning River
		Connor Tapp	Local Voices in a National Struggle: Grassroots LGBTQ Organizing During the Marriage Amendment Era
		AnnaBelle Boone	Leveling the Playing Field: Title IX in College Sports
		Seth Daugherty	The Debate on Hiroshima: Was It Right to Drop the Bomb?



Thursday April 9 continued

History Capstone Session 3	3:15-4:10		
		Natalie Snedden	The Illyrian Movement and Literature
		Cameron Jaros	The Soundtrack of Protest
		Anthony Guarino	When Prohibition Backfired: The Rise of Criminal Activity in the Mahoning Valley
Paper Session: Social Perceptions & Ethical Questions	4:15-5:15		
		Emily Vero	"If You Need Two Seats, You Should Pay for Them" - Anti-Obesity Rhetoric in Online Discussion of Southwest Airlines' "Extra Free Seat" Policy
		Hannah Murray	Hedonic Analysis on the Housing Price Impacts of the 2023 East Palestine Train Derailment
		Anthony Hake	How does user expertise influence prompt strategy use in LLM systems?
		Chelsea Moorhead	How TikTok Portrayals Impact Stigmatization Attitudes towards DID

Friday April 10			
Session Type		Presenter Names	Presentation Title
Paper Session: Confronting Change Past & Present	9:00-9:45		
		Darcy McTigue	The Ideals of Renaissance Virtue: "The (Abridged) History of Virtue from Antiquity to the Early Modern Period"
		Dil Rawat	Advancing Digital Civil Rights: A Web Accessibility Assessment and Reference Tool for Public-Sector Digital Content
		Lydia Brownlee	School Shootings: An American Epidemic
Poster Session C	10:00-10:20	Grace Narkum	Anxiety as Norm Defiance
		Ciera Cruse	Working Class Experiences and Perceptions Under Capitalism
		Katelyn Obermiyer	Clearing Campus Lungs: Proposal to Implement Vaping Awareness Activities at Youngstown State University
		Truc Ho	Healthy Smiles: Bringing Oral Health Into Primary Care
		Gabriella Evans	Untitled Sociology Capstone

Friday, April 10 continued

Paper Session: Culture, Community & Historical Expression	11:00- 11:30		
		Nicarlyle Hanchard	Sharing Culture and Building Community in the Mahoning Valley
		Anna Airhart	Theatre of the Second World War
Shipka/Reeder Keynote Lecture & Lunch	11:45-1:00	Paul Finkelman	Native American Rights, Race, Slavery, and Religious Liberty: The Progressive Visions of the Northwest Ordinance

	<p>About Paul Finkelman</p> <p>Paul Finkelman is a U.S. historian specializing in legal history and Constitutional law. He is the author of more than fifty books, more than 200 articles, and numerous op-eds. He is currently the Visiting Professor of Law at the University of Toledo College of Law. Finkelman has lectured at the United Nations, throughout the United States, and in more than a dozen other countries. His work has been cited in six decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court and in many appellate briefs.</p>	
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Paper Session: Interpreting the Meaning of Film & Writing	1:15-1:56		
		Justin Gonatas	21st Century American Dream Films: A Classification by Look and Feel
		Nathaniel P. Stokes	Authentic Interest: The Importance of Student Value Assessment in Their Own Writing
		Ashley Marie Kollar	Beyond Talk Therapy: Why Interoceptive and Proprioceptive Awareness Are Foundational to Trauma Recovery
Roundtable	2:00-3:00	Laura Beadling, Lucas Hardy, Dolores Sisco	Teaching Toni Morrison's Fiction
Workshop	3:00-4:00	David Simonelli	Taking the OAE: Strategies
Paper Session: People on the Margins	4:00-4:45		
		Anna Spagnola	The Ethics of Endangered Languages in Translation: A Case Study of the Revitalization of Breton
		Max Kennedy	Trans Humanity: The Invisible Group That Needs to be Seen
		Isabella Anderson	"Mrs. Satan": The Most Demonized Reformer of the Gilded Age

Friday, April 10 continued

Phi Alpha Theta Reception	5:00-6:00		
Merchant Lecture Series	6:00	Donna DeBlasio	McDonald, Ohio: The Consummate Company Town

Saturday April 11			
Virtual Session	10:00-12:00		
		Benedict Wong	The Transparency Paradox: How Behavioral Cynicism Drives Strategic Extraction of Crowd Sentiment
		Brendan Moore	What Do We Know About the Working Class?
		Dimitry Razumov	Facilitating Transformative Learning Experiences: A Comprehensive Methodological Framework
		Aditi Basu	Periodizing COVID-19 in the Global South: A Case-Study of India's Ecofeminist Transitions
		Jack Shaw	A Moment of Crisis: The Nature of the Global Multiversity
		Daniel Herrera	The Prison Nation: How Eritrea Traps Its People in Endless Crisis

Thank You

Office of the Dean, Beeghly College of Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, and Education
 Office of Community Engagement
 Office of Research Services
 Youngstown Historical Center of Industry & Labor
 The Albert J. Shipka Endowment
 The Robert W. Reeder I Memorial Endowment
 The Darling Memorial Endowment
 And the following YSU Faculty & Students:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vahid Atashbari • Diana Awad Scrocco • Hunter Barnett • Brian Bonhomme • Dawna Cerney • Amanda Fehlbaum • Jay Gordon • Billy Green • John Hazy • Cryshanna Jackson Leftwich | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molly McNamara • Martha Pallante • Nicole Pettitt • Swati Sethi • David Simonelli • Kyle Starkey • Joy Tang • Michael Vinkler • Daniel Wakefield |
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**VALERIE WAKSMUNSKI-STARR MEMORIAL CONFERENCE
on the LIBERAL ARTS, HUMANITIES, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**



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