



## Fall 2024 Schedule

Cullowhee, Main Campus (Wednesdays, 10am – 12pm)

September 11, 2024

**Dr. Jeffrey Vickery-When Politics and Religion collide with religious liberty: Iran, Israel, and America**

***Biography:***

Since 2002 Jeffrey Vickery has served as co-pastor of Cullowhee Baptist Church alongside Rev. Tonya Vickery. For more than 20 years, he has taught as an adjunct professor in the WCU Department of Philosophy and Religion. He has presented numerous times to the LIFE@WCU group on topics related to topics of interest related to Abrahamic faith traditions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Whenever he's not preaching or teaching, he's a proud father to two fabulous and talented adult daughters, both WCU graduates. Just for fun he loves to be on a trail going as far as possible, and then back again, before the sun goes down. In short, he loves living in Cullowhee, NC.

***Presentation Outline:***

Neither politics nor religion exist in a vacuum. Nor are either of them going to go away. They have influenced and been influenced by each other throughout history. We will discuss some of the basic issues at hand regarding religious liberty, and consider some examples from Israel, Iran, and the US – both historical and contemporary.

September 18, 2024

**Dr. Todd Collins – Power, Politics, and Precedents: The Supreme Court Year in Review**

***Biography:***

Dr. Todd Collins is the Steed Distinguished Professor and Department Head for the Political Science and Public Affairs Department at Western Carolina University. Holding a law degree from UNC-Chapel Hill and a PhD in Political Science from the University of Georgia, Dr. Collins is an award-winning teacher and scholar. His research includes publications on the behavior of judges, the role of attorneys, and media coverage of the Supreme Court. He can be found on the WCU campus teaching classes in constitutional law, judicial politics, working with pre-law students, and occasionally shooting three-pointers in Reid Gymnasium.

***Presentation Outline:***

Every year the Supreme Court decides cases that potentially can bring about massive changes in our society. This talk will cover some of the major cases decided during the 2023-2024 term. We will discuss recent Supreme Court cases on topics such as presidential immunity, federal regulation, abortion, and the Second Amendment into historical context and discuss the implications of these rulings.

September 25, 2024

**Dr. Casey Hurley – A Sociological History of Rock and Roll**

***Biography:***

I attended Catholic schools in Appleton, Wisconsin, in the 1960s. I earned a degree in English education at St. Norbert College in 1974. I taught English at my old high school for three years and then earned a Master's degree in educational administration at UW-Madison. I was a public high school assistant principal and principal for seven years, before returning to graduate school to earn a PhD in 1989. I came to WCU in 1989 and taught educational administration for thirty years.

***Presentation Outline:***

The first hour of the presentation will be a sociological history of rock and roll in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. The second hour will be for audience members to share how their experiences with the music affected their lives—past and present.

October 2, 2024

**Dr. Cathy L Grist, PhD – Early Childhood Education in NC**

October 9, 2024

**Annette Clapsaddle- Understanding Modern Cherokee Identity Through Literature**

***Biography:***

Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle, an enrolled citizen of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and resides in Cherokee, NC with her husband and two sons. She holds degrees from Yale University and the College of William and Mary. Her debut novel, *Even As We Breathe*, was released by the University Press of Kentucky in 2020, a finalist for the Weatherford Award and named one of NPR's Best Books of 2020. In 2021, it received the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award. Her first novel manuscript, *Going to Water* is winner of the Morning Star Award for Creative Writing from the Native American Literature Symposium (2012) and a finalist for the PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction (2014). Clapsaddle's work has appeared in *Yes! Magazine*, *Lit Hub*, *Salvation South*, *South Writ Large*, *Bon Appétit*, *Travel + Leisure Magazine*, and *The Atlantic* (among others). After serving as executive director of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, Annette returned to teaching at Swain County High School for over a dozen years. She is the former co-editor of the *Journal of Cherokee Studies* and serves as Vice President of Board of Directors for the Museum of the Cherokee People and President of the Board for the North Carolina Writers Network. In 2023, in partnership with Museum of the Cherokee People, Clapsaddle launched *Confluence: An Indigenous Writers' Workshop Series* that seeks to bring indigenous writers to the Qualla Boundary (Cherokee, NC) to work with aspiring writers in her community.

October 16, 2024

**Peter Koch – The Cowee Tunnel Tragedy**

***Biography:***

Peter Koch holds an M.A. in public history from North Carolina State University and is on the boards of the WNC Civil War Roundtable and of Civil War Trails. He has also had a long

involvement in the North Carolina Museums Council. At the Mountain Heritage Center, Peter is the Education Associate. He works extensively with K-12 groups, runs the MHC's summer camp program, and supports the many student employees and interns the MHC hosts.

***Presentation Outline:***

The Cowee 19 were nineteen men who drowned near Dillsboro NC in 1882. They were building the Cowee train tunnel on the Murphy Branch of the Western North Carolina Railroad. The state considered their death an accident, but their placement in the convict lease system was intentional. Locally, this is an oft told tale but what do we really know about the event? This program will examine the lives of these individuals from across North Carolina, what brought them to western NC, their fate, and how we remember them today.

October 23, 2024

**Mary Polanski – Women's History Trail Project-Franklin**

***Biography:***

Mary Polanski lives outside Franklin with her husband Stan. She is a retired Family Nurse Practitioner and enjoys kayaking, hiking, and native plant gardening. As a board member of the Folk Heritage Association of Macon County (FHAMC), she became involved in 2016 with efforts to create a local Women's History Trail. This FHAMC project was envisioned by the late beloved local naturalist and historian Barbara McRae. As one of the leaders of this project, Mary helped celebrate the opening of North Carolina's first women's history trail in Franklin in October 2018. She, Barbara and dedicated FHAMC leadership team members then moved forward to raise funds for a monumental public art statue that honors untold stories of three women in the tumultuous time when Macon County and Franklin were founded. Barbara's historical research led her to propose this incredible project. Created by renowned sculptor Wesley Wofford, this statue, *Sowing the Seeds of the Future*, was joyfully unveiled in a gateway location and given to the Town of Franklin in March 2024.

***Presentation Outline:***

What actually is the Women's History Trail, what women are featured, and how did this FHAMC project come to be? What is it like to commission a prominent sculptor for a major bronze statue and then follow the long path of funding and stages of the creative process? What are the impacts of *Sowing the Seeds of the Future* locally, regionally, and nationally? What are the stories behind the sculpture ladies - Na Ka Rebecca Morris (Cherokee woman), Salley (African-American woman) and Timoxena Siler Sloan (settler woman)? The presentation will focus on these questions and more through slides, anecdotes, and a live monologue performance. "The Sexton's Tale," written by Barbara McRae, reveals poignant musings about the woman Salley in the sculpture. Stan Polanski will be the portrayer of the sexton.

October 30, 2024

**Erin Adams – Downsizing and Accommodating Your Home For Aging In Place**

***Biography:***

Erin E. Adams is a Full Professor and the Program Coordinator for Interior Design at Western Carolina University. Her research areas of interest include historic preservation, Aging in Place, and sustainable design/ construction methodologies.

***Presentation Outline:***

In the presentation entitled, Downsizing and Accommodating your Home for Aging in Place, Adams will examine the benefits and challenges of downsizing and discuss how to best prepare existing homes to accommodate older adults that want to remain in their own homes and communities as they age.

November 6, 2024

**Valerie Falish – Travel Tips and Advice**

***Biography:***

Owner of Going Places Travel in Franklin, NC.

***Presentation Outline:***

In my session, I'll show you how to leverage current travel industry trends to elevate your vacation experiences. I will provide strategies for maximizing your travel budget and time away, share exclusive tips and tricks not found online, and present sample itineraries featuring unique trips that should be on your bucket list. Additionally, I'll incorporate interactive elements to help ensure you're fully prepared for your next adventure.

November 13, 2024

**Dr. Chris Cooper – Election Wrap Up**

***Biography:***

In addition to his published academic work, Dr. Cooper is a sought-after source about North Carolina, southern and American politics and has been quoted in a variety of media including the New York Times, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal. His most recent book, *Anatomy of a Purple State: A North Carolina Politics Primer*, is available at a variety of bookstores, including City Lights in Sylva.

***Presentation Outline:***

Please join Chris Cooper, the Madison Distinguished Professor of Political Science & Public Affairs and Director of the Haire Institute for Public Policy, for a discussion about the results and meaning of the 2024 election—just a week and a day after its conclusion.

November 20, 2024

**Dr. Daniel Pierce – The intersection of Moonshine and NASCAR**

***Biography:***

Daniel S. Pierce is the author of eight books, including *Tarheel Lightnin': How Secret Stills and Fast Cars Made North Carolina the Moonshine Capital of the World* (UNC Press, 2019) and *Real NASCAR: White Lightning, Red Clay, and Big Bill France* (UNC Press, 2010). In 2020, he co-founded the Railroad Incarcerated Laborer Memorial Project (RAIL) which seeks to appropriately honor and memorialize the lives, and often tragic deaths, of the workers (primarily African American convicts) who constructed the railroad into Western North Carolina in the 1870s. He is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of North Carolina Asheville.

***Presentation Outline:***

Legend has it that early stock car racers hauled illegal liquor on Saturday night and then turned around and raced the same car on Sunday at the local dirt track. While this is true, in addition to the drivers, many of the mechanics, car owners, promoters, and racetrack owners were deeply involved in the illegal liquor business. Indeed, the early stock car racing that led to NASCAR was steeped in moonshine.

December 4, 2024

**Michael LaVoie – Restoring the Long Person: Ela Dam Project**

***Biography:***

Mike LaVoie currently serves as the Natural Resources Director for Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and has worked for the Tribe since 2007. Mike was raised in upstate New York and has resided in North Carolina since his completion of an M.S. in Biology at Western Carolina University. He worked for a variety of natural resource management agencies in Alaska, New York, North Carolina, and Tennessee prior to beginning work with the EBCI. Mike also currently serves as a regional director and Vice-President for the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society.

***Presentation Outline:***

Southeastern rivers (“Long Person”) have been intricately tied to Cherokee culture and identify for thousands of years and continue support subsistence, cultural, and economic relationships. Today, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) is working to protect and conserve the Oconaluftee River through basin-wide stream restoration projects. These actions include work with a coalition of partners, led by the EBCI, to remove the Ela Dam and restore culturally significant fisheries to the Qualla Boundary.