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Cover photo:

Isaiah Custodio. (Photo by Bobby Rettew)

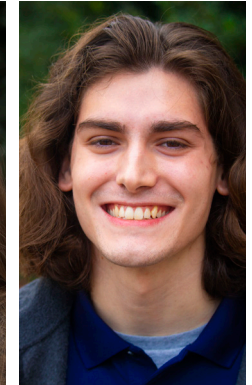
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SYNTHESIS

Anderson University

Vol. 5, Issue 2 | Winter 2023

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Synthesis is a publication of the College of Arts and Sciences at Anderson University in Anderson, South Carolina, published twice each year.

Herpetology class makes a splash

By Micah Tassy

Walking through a marshy area of Rocky River Nature Park, biology students in Anderson University's new herpetology class get a hands-on look at the behavior of local wildlife. A frog calls into the stillness while a snake slinks across the grass, looking for its next meal.

Herpetology is the study of amphibians and reptiles, including their anatomy, physiology, and how they interact with the environment. The course is taught by Associate Professor of Biology Joni Criswell, the chair of Anderson's Biology Department.

Criswell said she enjoys teaching about animal behavior patterns, "especially the weird stuff."

"For example, there is a desert reptile with a defense mechanism to squirt blood out of its eye," Criswell said. "Like, really? How did you get that strategy developed?"

She also teaches the proper ways to handle the creatures, and how to identify them, whether by look, or by sound, she said.

Criswell said the idea of the course is to blend biology with environmental science, to allow for a more diverse study outlet.

Associate Dean for Arts and Sciences Carrie Koenigstein said the course was a natural fit for the department.

"We had a built-in expert in Dr. Criswell, as well as a lot of student interest," Koenigstein, a biochemist, said.



Stilman photo

Trentin Stilman

Brianna Reo, a senior biology student, said she was most excited to learn about the frogs in the area, as well as learning more about venomous snakes.

Criswell said students are also taught how amphibians and reptiles can be bioindicators of the environment that they inhabit. Bioindication is how

Students say they find the course fascinating.

"I am most excited to learn about the proper way to set up and use herp traps as well as the various ways in which we can study them to further our knowledge," said junior Trentin Stilman.

Brianna Reo, a senior biology student, said she was most excited to

Going forward, I hope that the class helps me gain a better understanding of the relationships between different reptile and amphibian groups.

Trentin Stilman



Associate Professor of Biology Joni Criswell shows her class images of various types of amphibian behaviors during a lecture for AU's new herpetology course. (Photo by Micah Tassy)

different species reflect the state of the environment around them, by displaying health effects. This is especially true for amphibians, due to the fact that their skin is hypersensitive to environmental changes.

If there's an abundance of dead frogs, there could be something wrong with the habitat they are in. If one species suffers then others will as well, especially if the food chain is disrupted, Criswell said.

"Even if you aren't a fan of the animals, the class can help you appreciate the creatures and how they impact our environment," she said.

The class will not only expand learning between the two fields of study, but will hopefully encourage others to pursue their academic goals, and enjoy themselves while doing it, Criswell said.



A lab axolotl eyes a food pellet, ready to grab it. (Photo by Micah Tassy)

Telling a story of God's love

Communication student overcomes life-threatening medical challenge

By Dylan Johnson

Isaiah Custodio's mother always had an anxious feeling that he would die young.

So when he suffered a life-threatening brain bleed at age 13, "faith" became a word to live by daily and one that would eventually lead to a story of God's grace through a miraculous recovery.

Custodio, a senior communication major with a concentration in digital media, said his life changed one afternoon after football practice in eighth grade. During practice, he began experiencing a severe headache that led coaches to call his mother, Christina.

After a frantic drive to the hospital, Isaiah lost all voluntary bodily function and doctors quickly moved him to the operating room to receive what they hoped would be life-saving brain surgery.



It was hard to put pieces together at the time, Christina Custodio said. She had no idea whether Isaiah would survive the procedure, whether he would walk or even talk again.

"We have one piece of the entire puzzle, and God has the whole box with the picture on it," Christina explained.

Christina Custodio Isaiah would stabilize but the bleed greatly affected his motor functions and it wasn't known at the time whether he would ever walk again.

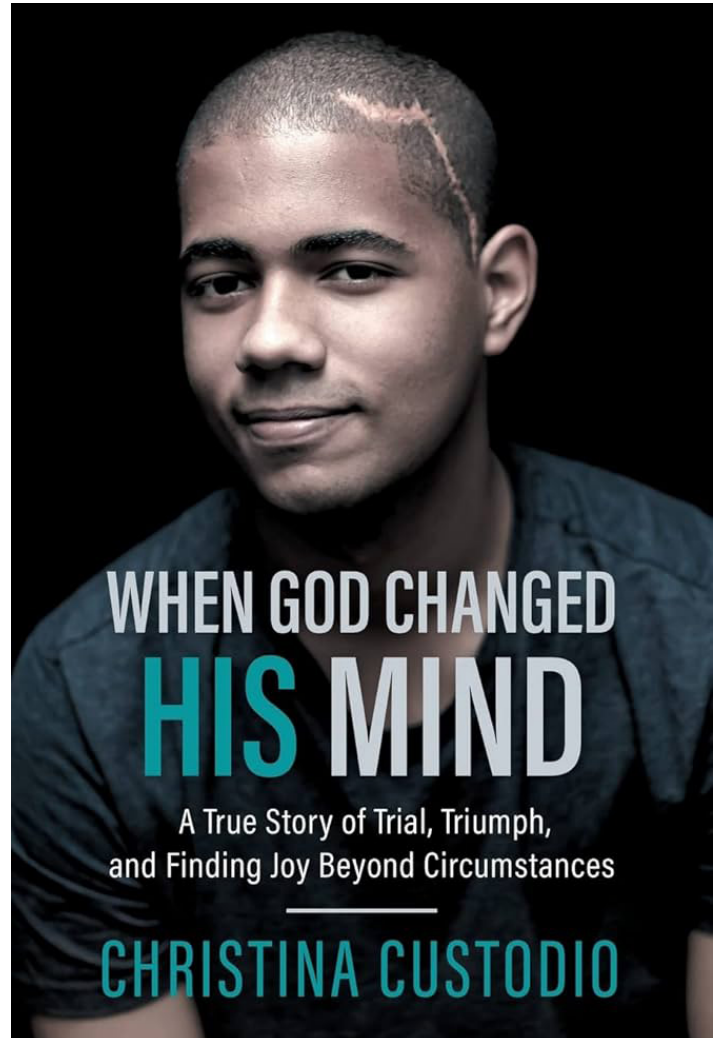
"There was another boy who had the same issue and walked out after two or three days. I thought, 'Why couldn't Isaiah walk out like that?'" Christina said. "But then there's another mom who's asking, 'Why did my son get to live?'"

Custodio credits his mom and their community for their constant prayers during that time and ongoing support as he fought to regain control of his body again.

He said brain injuries can bring difficult emotional turmoil along with social isolation.

"I sometimes cried in the hospital," he said. "Nobody knew except my mom, who was always there."

After a long hospital stay, Custodio said he eventually was able to move into regular physical therapy while staying at home. The work continued to be difficult but living with family marked important progress.



Isaiah Custodio's dramatic recovery from a life-threatening brain bleed led his mother, Christina Custodio, to write a book about the experience. Isaiah is a communication major with a concentration in digital media at AU.

However, more frustrations mounted as his youthful spirit clashed with his inability to do most things that 13-year-old boys like to do outside.

Christina said she had to rely on something other than her own strength and credited God's supernatural peace during that time.

Custodio said he continued having visitors during his time in physical therapy, and at one point got to see his football team name him honorary captain.

Once he could get out more, Isaiah was able to be closer with more of his family during the post-hospital time, watching football again with his dad and growing more into being an older brother for his sisters.



Isiah Custodio, right, shares a laugh with his friend, Sam Nadal, another communication major. After recovering from a life-threatening brain bleed, Custodio is active at Anderson University. He serves as a student government senator, Public Relations Student Society of America officer, intramural referee, and alpha leader. (Photo by Dylan Johnson)

While his road to recovery was excruciating at times, Custodio said recalling that is important for him.

“My purpose is to tell my story,” Custodio said. “There were many nights I asked God, ‘Where are you?’ Everybody goes through hardships, and sometimes we just forget that God is there. Phi-lippians teaches that we can do all things through Christ. I forget and I must be reminded.”

Custodio said he had many opportunities to give up but kept fighting, and now encourages others to tell their own stories.

“I feel like I’m just talking to people, but others tell me it’s inspiring,” he said. “It’s meaningful and it gives me hope. You know you’re not the only one that’s been broken before.”

Today, although he continues to face some physical challenges, Custodio has a star-studded resume as a Boys State Outstanding Citizen award winner, an intramural referee, a student government senator,

a PRSSA committee chairperson, and a peer mentor for diversity and inclusion. He also helps first-year students as an AU alpha leader.

His mother, an author and inspirational speaker, tells many of the early and emotionally intense parts of his story in her book, “When God

“We are part of one great story... life that flows out of friendship with a personal God, whose love writes our story.”

Philip Ryken

Changed His Mind.”

She said she continues to be inspired by her son’s incredible outlook.

“He keeps going back to God’s plan for his life when he has struggles,” she said. “He’s like, ‘I know He’s with me now because He was with me then.’”

After graduating Anderson University, Custodio said he wants to pursue a career where he can help others and share his testimony.

“I love this quote by Philip Ryken and I think it really applies to my story, ‘We are part of one great story... life that flows out of friendship with a personal God, whose love writes our story,’” Custodio said.

From canopy to classroom

Biology professor travels the world studying birds

By McKenzie Upton

From the coastal wetlands of Peru, through the jungles of Mexico and to the grasslands of Africa, Oscar Gonzalez travels the world to study his favorite animals — birds.

Gonzalez, who began teaching at Anderson University in August as an associate biology professor, holds a doctorate in interdisciplinary ecology and two master's degrees in zoology and biodiversity management.

He said he follows his passion from country to country to discover bird species and study the impact of human activity on their environments. He's visited the diverse landscapes of South America, Africa and Europe to connect with nature.

"I love to explore. When I study ecological interactions, I feel a sense of gratitude for creation," he said.

Gonzalez said he also works with environmental groups in South America to study aviary interactions, advocate for nature conservation, and bridge science and faith.

"Science and biology help me see more of God's miracles," he said.

Born and raised in Peru, Gonzalez became fascinated with birds from a young age.

"My family's dogs got sick and we couldn't keep them anymore, so we started raising ornamental chickens," he said. "I was 11 years old when I started watching their behavior and fell in love."

Gonzalez said he first experienced researching birds in college.

"They are fascinating in their colors and songs," he said. "Exploring all of the adaptations of the birds inspired me and I wanted to know more."

Gonzalez now investigates new species, monitors their behavior, and works to preserve wildlife habitats.

On a trip to Rwanda with the World Wildlife Fund in 2023, he said he was reminded of the animals in the Bible while watching wild buffalos, hippos and giraffes.

"It is moments like this where I find the inspiration to keep working," he said.

I'm a scientist but also a person of faith. There should be no contradictions. I know it's popular in the media that science and faith are at war but that's not true."



Oscar Gonzalez watches birds in Unchog, an elfin forest in Huanuco, Peru. (Photo courtesy of Oscar Gonzalez)

In 2003, he was invited to Machu Picchu, an ancient city in Peru, as an environmental consultant for conserving the biodiversity on the mountain. He also spent time in Unchog, a forest of Huanuco, Peru.

Gonzalez works with many ornithology organizations. He has led workshops in the United States, supervised research groups in England, organized ornithology events in Lima, Peru, and worked as a field director for many expeditions.

Oscar Gonzalez

Gonzalez also travels to churches to speak about conservation. He teaches others to be kind to nature, connecting the world of science to the word of Christ.

"Birds are the closest thing to angels," he said.

Gonzalez said he once struggled with his religious identity and went through a phase of atheism in his teens. After hearing the Gospel in high school, he became strong in faith but experienced an internal



Carpish, the first regional conservation area in Huanuco, Peru, was the site of a research trip in January 2013. Scientists evaluated the flora and fauna of the environment and studied pollination ecology. (Photo courtesy of Oscar Gonzalez)

conflict when a friend told him his favorite subject, science, was wrong.

“I had a crisis of faith. I was told both science and the Bible couldn’t exist at once,” Gonzalez said.

He said God helped him find Christian scientists who are committed to both truths. He is now a member of the American Scientific Affiliation which believes faith and science interact in harmony.

“I’m a scientist but also a person of faith,” Gonzalez said. “There should not be any contradiction. I know it’s popular in the media that science and faith are at war but that’s not true.”

He said he hopes his students walk away with gratitude and respect for God’s creation.

Associate Professor of Biology Joni Criswell works closely with Gonzalez, whom the students call “Dr. Oscar,” through the environmental science program.

“When he visited AU, all of the students crowded around him to ask questions,” she said. “He always makes things really exciting.”

Ryan Davis, a sophomore biochemistry major, said Gonzalez makes his class interesting by telling stories about his travels.

“When he was talking, it felt like he was telling a story instead of just giving a lecture,” Davis said. “He’s really smart and knows so much about biology and science.”

Gonzalez said it’s the simple things in life that bring him joy.

“I love being outdoors, bird watching and sharing what I find,” he said.

Gonzalez is a part of multiple scientific organizations and has served as the president of Grupo Aves del Peru, a non-profit organization dedicated to researching and protecting bird species and their habitats. He has written over 40 publications about bird ecology and his investigations.

In the future, Gonzalez hopes to take a group of students from Anderson University to Peru for hands-on experience.

“A former student of mine teaches conservation in Huanuco,” Gonzalez said. “I hope to reconnect with my research there and bring my students so we can help the local communities.”

With much passion for teaching and many ideas to help enhance the program, Gonzalez said he is excited to be at AU.

“I am grateful to be at Anderson University. God called me here and I want to do my best to fulfill the mission of sharing my experience and connecting students to God’s creation,” he said.



Oscar Gonzalez holds a scarlet bellied mountain tanager, a species native to the tropical Andes forest in western South America. (Photo courtesy of Oscar Gonzalez)

Commemorating the American Revolution

Traveling trunks help bring history to life

By Emma Bechtold

A group of Anderson University professors and students are teaming up with America250, a nonpartisan organization working to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolutionary War, to create traveling trunks as learning tools for grade school students in Anderson County.

The trunks will support a curriculum to teach students about the United States' war for independence using hand-selected items to enhance learning.

Lindsay Privette, assistant professor of history, said the trunks, which will be ready for use in the 2024-25 academic year, will contain lesson plans and other material for teachers along with "cool stuff that teachers would want to use in their classroom but couldn't afford to buy."



Privette photo

Privette said that when complete, the trunks might contain items such as a soldier's uniform, replica artifacts, and other interactive teaching aids that show students what life was like in colonial times.

Each individual traveling trunk will consist of either a bin, leather trunk or some other alternative casing, and be available through libraries to be checked out by teachers for public school, private school, or home-school groups as needed.

"They have assignments, lesson plans, unit plans, and all that correlate to the state standards," Privette said.

Each container will feature items that tell a story of major historical significance and provide onlookers with an immersive experience, she added.

Privette is working with Tanya Cordoba, assistant professor of education, and students Kacey King, a senior secondary social studies education major and Garret Dickson, a senior secondary social studies education major. Anderson University alumna Laura Wallace is also working on the project.

The work is made possible through a \$10,000 grant from the South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission.

Privette said the national America250 commission

has asked each state to develop ways to commemorate and celebrate in their states.

Cordoba described her initial role as "identifying state standards" for the curriculum inside the trunks.

"Together we both identified some secondary social studies students that would be able to help create the curric-

ulum for the trunks. They are working on unit plans along with individual lesson plans. We identified state standards and English Language Arts standards across the grade levels," Cordoba said.

Cordoba explained that the "backward design" model the students have learned in class along with the classroom experience prepared them for this project. The backward design model is an approach where one starts with identifying the standards and learning outcomes and then works on the curriculum last to meet those outcomes.

The students are doing most of the work for the project.

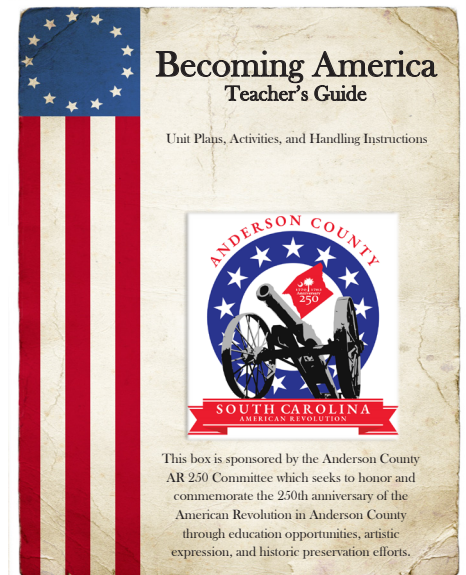
"It's really fun to tap in to see what they're learning in education" and communicate on an "educator to educator level," Privette said.

King said she's approached the work as if she were creating materials that she would use in her own classroom.

"I want to create something that I could use in my classroom one day," King said.

She said her hands-on experience in the classroom has allowed her to bring "the interest of students" into her work.

"I pulled a lot from my current U.S. history class," King said.



A teacher's guide cover for curriculum being developed to teach grade school students about the American Revolution.

Artificial Intelligence?

CAS professors explore the pros and cons of AI in the classroom

By Serena Thompson

According to a September 2023 study commissioned by Turnitin, a company colleges and universities use to check documents for plagiarism, nearly half of college students are using artificial intelligence tools on a regular basis.

But what exactly are they using AI for? Writing, creating art, completing assignments in general?

According to the study, all of the above.

Anderson University's College of Arts and Sciences students and professors are exploring the appropriate uses of AI with the recognition that there is both good and bad to be found in the technology.

Bobby Rettew, assistant professor of communication, said he uses AI virtually every day in the video production classes he teaches. Generative AI tools have been increasingly incorporated into the cameras and editing software that students are learning.

"In the video world, it is used for speed and efficiency," Rettew said, noting that video editing software like the professional-level Adobe Premiere Pro he teaches, uses AI to smooth edits between segments.

Rettew said that more recently, AI has begun to be used to create transcripts of video interviews, a task that is otherwise very labor intensive.

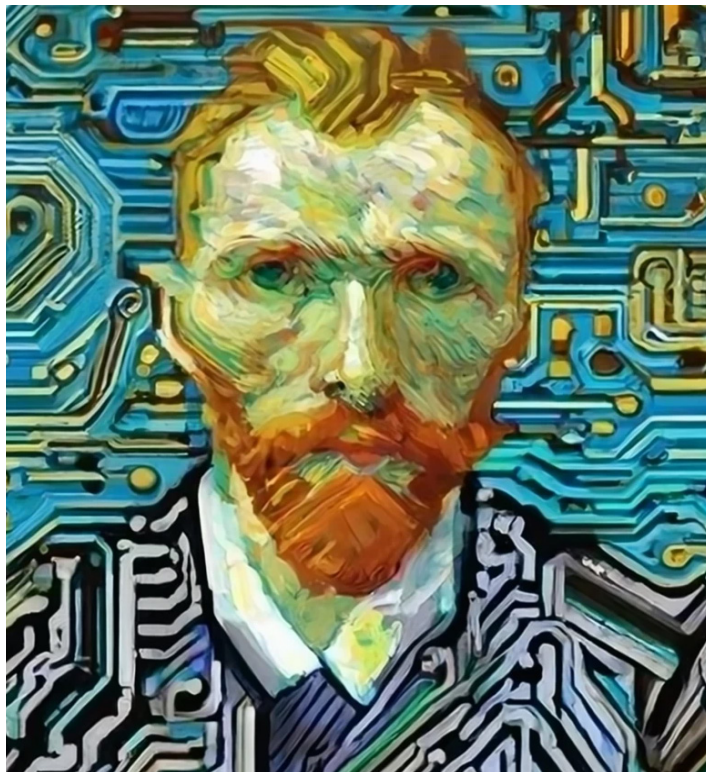
James Duncan, another communication professor, experimented with allowing students to use AI to help them identify cases to include in papers for his media law course. The students were still required to research the cases, but the AI helped them to sort through the case law available.

AU science professors have also used the generative AI chatbot ChatGPT in reverse by using it to provide an answer to a biology question. The students were then asked to examine the response to determine where the AI-generated answer was correct and where it was not. The department also had a panel of professors to discuss how and why their answer would be different than the one generated by the chatbot.

Professors also point out the dangers presented by AI as well. Chatbots such as ChatGPT can produce text within seconds, using only a prompt.

Jim Haughey, a professor of English and an associate dean of CAS, said AI will likely lead professors to adjust the way they give students writing assignments.

"I think AI is a useful asset in other fields but in uni-



This image of a computer circuit board rendered in the style Vincent Van Gogh was created using the free AI image generator at [craiyon.com](https://www.craiyon.com).

versities it will make it more difficult for teachers to curb cheating on take-home assignments," Haughey said. "The result will be that teachers will assign more in-class exams."

Beginning with the fall 2023 semester, a section on the ethical use of artificial intelligence was added to all AU syllabi. The section states that AI tools should not be used in graded coursework unless the professor explicitly allows it.

English major Cora Runion said students must be careful to use the tools ethically.

"You have to be fully aware of the topic that you are researching when you ask AI to write," Runion said. "You can use it in a way that is not plagiarism and is ethical, but you have to view it more as a tool and not as a source."

Biochemistry major Grayson Inman said he can see AI being "really useful in the scientific community."

The technology has been touted as speeding up advancements in such areas as engineering, climate science and drug development.

Initiative promotes racial reconciliation

By Sam Norris

An initiative to promote racial reconciliation in the Anderson community is getting some help from AU faculty and students.

The Anderson Remembrance and Reconciliation Initiative started in 2020 with the dual purpose of helping the community remember a dark era of the past that saw five documented cases of lynching but also provide reconciliation to a more unified future.

Stuart Sprague, a retired Anderson University professor and one of the leaders of the initiative, said he was inspired by a similar initiative in a Texas community and wanted to bring something similar to Anderson.

To do so, he and other community leaders worked with the Equal Justice Initiative, a non-profit organization based in Montgomery, Alabama. The EJI memorializes lynching victims in the post-Reconstruction period after the American Civil War.

Sprague said in response to research identifying five area lynching victims, his group wanted to honor and memorialize these victims.

The memorials first took the form of glass jars, each holding soil collected from the five lynching sites. Each jar bears the name of the victim and the date of their lynching. One set of the jars has been added to a collection of similar jars at the EJI's Legacy Museum in Montgomery and another at the Anderson County Museum.

"A part of memorializing is not to put up a marker and walk away but to have a conversation within your community about why there was lynching and why we should not ever let it happen again," Sprague said.

The group also commissioned a sculpture by artist Herman Keith to memorialize the lynching victims. The sculpture is traveling to locations around the county to maximize the number of people who can see it and is currently on display in AU's Thrift Library.

James Noble, vice president of diversity and inclusion at Anderson University, said the purpose of the sculpture is to allow remembrance for the people of Anderson and to promote understanding.

"Now that this has happened, how can we make a difference? We can make a difference by coming together as one and forging ahead in our lives today," Noble said.

AU students have also gotten involved with the initiative. Students taking documentary video produc-



Kevin Williams, Anderson University's associate dean for diversity and inclusion, poses alongside jars of soil collected from lynching sites across the country on display at the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. Five jars collected from sites in the Anderson area were recently added to the museum's collection. (Photo courtesy Kevin Williams)

tion began producing last spring a series of documentary videos on the lynching victims. The first was on Reuben Elrod who was a victim of racial terror lynching by a mob in 1903.

"I think students are great to get involved with this project because they bring a fresh perspective," said Assistant Professor of Communication Bobby Rettew, who teaches the documentary course. "It is an educational opportunity to learn, and they bring passion to the table."

In the semesters ahead, Rettew plans to lead students to tell the stories of each of the lynching victims in Anderson County.

Senior communication major Adam Edwards said producing the first documentary helped him learn more than just video production skills.

"Telling this story and understanding people's perspectives opened my eyes to a different perspective



Artist Hermon Keith, second from the left, discusses his sculpture memorializing the Anderson area's five lynching victims following a dedication service at Thrift Library on the Anderson University campus. The traveling sculpture will be on display in the library into the spring of 2024. (Photo by Bobby Rettew)

of injustice," Edwards said. "Telling this story has pushed me to reconcile and remember."

Redunda Noble, an adjunct professor of history, said she covered the injustices of the Reconstruction era in her American history class this year.

She said she took advantage of having the remembrance and reconciliation sculpture in Thrift Library by giving her class the opportunity to visit the sculpture, engage with the subject matter, and then write about a topic involving the sculpture.

Students in Principles of Public Relations during the fall semester also engaged with the initiative through a class project. AAR&RI served as a client for student teams that produced public relations plans to help the group communicate its messages throughout the community.

"The project gave students the opportunity to apply what they have learned about public relations and also learn about American and specifically South Carolina history," Reeves said.



A student from AU's documentary video production team interviews Joaquin Cortez, a descendant of lynching victim Reuben Elrod, for a documentary film about Elrod. (Photo by Bobby Rettew).

The liberal arts promote free thinking

By Jaycie Smith

Inside the walls of Watkins Hall, students buzz between classes that at first glance seem to have nothing in common. You might find a student giving a speech on the lower level, reading Jane Austen on the main level, or putting on a lab coat upstairs.

In each case, however, the students are taking liberal arts courses designed to help them become well-educated critical thinkers. In this context, “liberal” refers to the Latin word “liberalis,” meaning “worthy of a free person.”

The liberal arts consists of a well-rounded study of subjects such as the humanities, sciences, and mathematics. All Anderson University students take a core of liberal arts classes to provide a foundation for the pursuit of knowledge in their future career fields.

“Sometimes when you hear people talk about a liberal arts education and the core classes required for students, there’s a tendency for them to diminish it, as if it’s one of those things you need to get out of the way before you get to the more important topics,” Wayne Cox, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said.

In reality, however, the core liberal arts courses set the stage for deeper understanding when students begin specializing through the courses of their majors, he said, adding that the ability to think freely and cultivate one’s own ideas is the key to building an intelligent society.

Many professors make it well known that they teach their classes with a passion for the subject matter and a deep understanding of how their topic will enable students to become better thinkers and excel in their professions.

“I think history teaches us such valuable lessons everyone can apply to their life, even if you’re not going to be a historian or even be in a career field that has anything to do with the College of Arts and Sciences,” said Daniel Byrd, an Anderson University adjunct history professor. “History opens the door to things like critical thinking and boldly challenges notions you’ve previously had. This can help a student in the business world or even in ministry.”

Because the liberal arts are often confused with other



Roger Flynn, chair of the Department of History and Political Science, lectures during a government class. History and political science are considered to be liberal arts subjects as are literature, philosophy, mathematics, and physical sciences like astronomy and chemistry. (AU photo by Jason Jones)

types of art or with political affiliations, Cox said he believes it is imperative for everyone to understand the true meaning of the term.

“As an educated person, it is everyone’s responsibility to try and see things clearly and not to follow people blindly,” Cox said. “This is what a liberal arts education helps you to achieve. It’s not to make you liberal and it’s not to make you conservative. It’s to make you free from having to be one or the other.”

The College of Arts and Sciences offers a broad range of classes, from general to upper-level science, history, math, and language courses to major-specific learning.

Common ground is found when students realize that their core classes are laying a foundation for their success, Cox said, a sentiment echoed by other professors.

“I truly believe everyone needs to have a basic understanding of mathematics just to be a good citizen,” Lecturer of Mathematics Traci Carter said. “There is so much order in this world and for us to live according to God’s purpose we need mathematics to think logically and understand the order all around us. Our goal should be to delve into that understanding with different ways of approaching problems and solving them. Mathematics is in all of it, all of the things that affect our worldview.”



Photo by Alli Kennedy

Wayne Cox



Students gather outside of Watkins Hall, which houses the College of Arts and Sciences, where many of AU's core liberal arts courses are taught. Professors at AU seek to create a learning environment that helps students to build critical thinking skills. (AU photo by Jason Jones)

Many students understand that AU is being intentional in providing them with an extensive core foundation for their futures.

"As a student who is passionate about education, I can see how my core classes like English and history are shaping the way I view education as a whole," said sophomore education major Alina Estrada. "I want my future students to have the opportunity to think freely and ponder big questions."

Cox said the link between a solid education and the ability to think critically for oneself is an important one.

"I'm not sure how much freedom students have in high school to be able to question why they are being taught something," Cox said.

He said that at AU, the goal is for students to understand what it means to believe in something for themselves.

Being exposed to different ideas in classes is a key principle of liberal arts.

"In history, you are able to look at different perspectives," Byrd said. "This helps students understand how to process what they believe and why they believe it."

Cox said helping students have a well-rounded view of the world is the best approach to guiding students to being free-thinking individuals.

"The best way to learn something about your own language or beliefs is to look at it from another point of view," Cox said. "For example, the first-time students really start to learn something about English is when they study Spanish or French."

He said that when students graduate, they will find themselves in situations where they must make decisions that have lasting impacts. AU strives to prepare them to do so successfully for their future careers, families, and dreams.



Students have a discussion on AU's front lawn. A liberal arts education seeks to expose students to a variety of perspectives to help them learn to think critically about issues. (AU photo by Jason Jones)

Making physics fun

Lab gets new equipment, software

By Zoe Dubiski

The desks shine new and glossy, and the focused silence is punctuated only by the click of keyboards. Students lean over their computers, dutifully watching a program graph data about the velocity of a small cart rolling on the table beside them.

They are using the updated physics lab in Watkins Hall, which recently received new furniture and equipment, said Associate Dean of Sciences Carrie Koenigstein. The new equipment includes eight PASCO educational lab interfaces, which interact with Capstone software data collection and analysis software. The interfaces can collect experimental data, such as the position and speed of an object in real time.

Koenigstein said the lab also received new flooring, whiteboards, and a projector.



PASCO Interface

Professor of Physics Stanley Paul said he chose the PASCO interface because it collects data more precisely than a human and the Capstone software because it interprets and graphs the data in real time for the students to use.

Paul said that by updating the equipment, the labs have become more interactive, more enjoyable, and more effective for the students in class.

“When you do experiments manually, there is always a possibility of human error, so we can minimize the errors in this, because the sensors do the job,” Paul said. “Students get a better chance to learn the concepts.”

Students say they are benefiting from the improvements.

“The physical setup helps you visualize what you want, and then the graph takes what you have and shows where you want to go,” Emma Keeling, a junior majoring in biological chemistry, said.

She said that despite being a newcomer to physics,



Dubiski photo

Carrie Koenigstein



A student uses new Capstone software to graph data in AU's updated physics lab. The assignment is to calculate the acceleration of a cart on the ramp. The equipment and software can log and graph the data for the students to interpret. (Photo by Zoe Dubiski)

the equipment “helps...prove why physics work and why the equations are working in the lab.”

Ethan Waybright, another junior majoring in biological chemistry, said he likes the simplicity of using the new equipment..

“I had a lot of trouble (in the previous labs) interfacing it with my computer... but with Capstone, it instantly showed up exactly how I wanted it to,” he said.

Students say that between Paul's attentive teaching and the new equipment, they are set for success.

Paul is “very effective at helping people who aren't suited to physics... and helps them apply it to real life,” Waybright said. And as the interface crunches the data, it “makes logical sense... making the lab go more smoothly and a lot more fun.”

Paul and Koenigstein said it took a university-wide effort to update the lab.

Campus maintenance staff installed the new floors and desks, while information technology team members integrated the new computers. Koenigstein said that staff even came in over the summer to help clean out the lab to prepare it for renovation. The old equipment was recycled into one of the other science labs for further use.



Dubiski photo

Ethan Waybright



Dubiski photo

Stanley Paul



Professor of Physics Stanley Paul (center) works with students to conduct an experiment using new equipment in the physics lab. The updated equipment and software allows students to easily make precise measurements. Software creates graphs in real time that help students interpret what they are seeing in the experiment. (AU photo by Jason Jones)

Paul joined the Anderson faculty a year ago and noticed the changes were needed. Now they set the College of Arts and Sciences apart from other schools.

“Many colleges may not have this equipment,” Paul said. “It’s a good learning experience for the students.”

Koeingstein encourages students who may be anxious about taking a physics course to take advantage of the learning opportunities afforded by the updated lab.

“There’s a lot of fun truth in there,” Koeingstein said. “Don’t be scared of physics.”



New sensors like the one above allow students to easily make precise measurements while conducting experiments as they are doing in the photo at right. (Above photo by Zoe Dubiski. Photo at right by Jason Jones.)



Boy Scout steps up to improve nature park

Eagle project adds new platform, creates easier access to wetlands area

By Lucy Wells

Anderson University's Rocky River Nature Park has become a little easier to navigate and explore thanks to a Boy Scout project that added steps to the waterfront near the park's outdoor wetlands classroom site.

Boy Scout Liam Hopkins, 17, of Anderson, partnered last summer with Associate Professor of Biology Laary Cushman, to design and build the new steps and platform as a project to earn his Eagle badge, which signifies the highest achievement in Boy Scouting.



Laary Cushman

"Liam's father, Buddy Hopkins, contacted me about doing some project on the trails," said Cushman. "We (Cushman and Hopkins) had a walkthrough of the park and discussed a number of projects and Liam chose to do the wetlands project."

Hopkins, a senior in high school, is a Boy Scout in Troop 234 in Anderson County.

"I chose (this project) because it would directly affect the community I live in," Hopkins said.

The nature park is an approximately 200-acre tract off Old Williamston Road adjacent to the main AU campus. It is owned by AU and managed by the Rocky River Conservancy, a private non-profit organization.

Hopkins said he knew "how important the park was for the ecology students and any other biology students to use the steps," which is why he chose specifically to build this platform.

To earn an Eagle badge, a Boy Scout must go through the process of planning, executing, and following up with a project that benefits the community he lives in, Hopkins said.



Liam Hopkins

The Eagle project took 276 hours, which included the preparation, planning, and the physical labor of building the steps and platform.



A plaque is attached to one of the supporting beams of the platform to credit Liam Hopkins as the builder. (Photo by Robert Reeves)

Hopkins said he first created a design for the steps and platform that would lead down to the wetlands area.

"He sent me a rough project draft and I approved that," Cushman said.

Hopkins then had the project approved through the Boy Scouts' Six and Twenty County District.

Once approved, Hopkins collected supplies for the project. Hopkins said he was able to get \$300 worth



This platform was built by a team of Boy Scouts led by Liam Hopkins. It leads to the wetlands area in the Rocky River Nature Park. (Photo by Robert Reeves)



Boy Scout Liam Hopkins, right, sweeps off the platform leading to the waterfront. Hopkins, a Boy Scout in the Six and Twenty Anderson County District, recruited 16 of his fellow scouts to build the platform as part of the process of earning his Eagle badge. (Photo by Ken Ruinard)

of supplies from Lowes, while the rest was covered by donations from friends and family.



Chris Luplow

Then began the process of construction. Hopkins, along with 16 other Boy Scouts from his troop, spent over 130 hours of physical labor building the platform.

“The Eagle project is pretty much supposed to be led by the scout,” Troop Leader Chris Luplow said. “So it’s not just doing the service and doing the work, but it is also showing leadership. For him—

he needed to show leadership to the group.”

Hopkins’s contribution to the Rocky River Nature Park has already benefitted Anderson students as they continue to work at the wetlands classroom, Cushman said.

“I definitely wanted to help out Anderson University,” Hopkins said, noting that he is planning on attending the university in the fall of 2024.



Boy Scout Liam Hopkins stands at the entrance to the Rocky River Nature Park after completing his project to earn his Eagle badge. (Photo by Ken Ruinard)

English professor receives Fulbright award

By AU Marketing & Communication

Associate Professor of English Kolawole Olaiya is supporting professional communication programs at the Federal University of Technology Akure in Nigeria this academic year as part of a U.S. Department of State and Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award.

Olayia's focus is twofold: he is teaching graduate students in the school's Enhanced Learning and Digital Humanities program and helping them develop new project ideas. He is also conducting research himself on the customs and cultural attitudes that encourage and indirectly normalize sexual and domestic violence with the goal of publishing his findings.

Olayia is particularly interested in the representation of customs and cultural attitudes that normalize certain behaviors as "common sense" in the Nigerian film industry—commonly known as "Nollywood."

"I am grateful for the opportunity provided by Fulbright to help students at the Federal University of Technology Akure," Olaiya said. "This is a unique opportunity to exchange ideas and share experiences with students and faculty in Nigeria and a great opportunity to learn from them. Hopefully this will lead to a collaboration between the Federal University of Technology Akure and Anderson University."

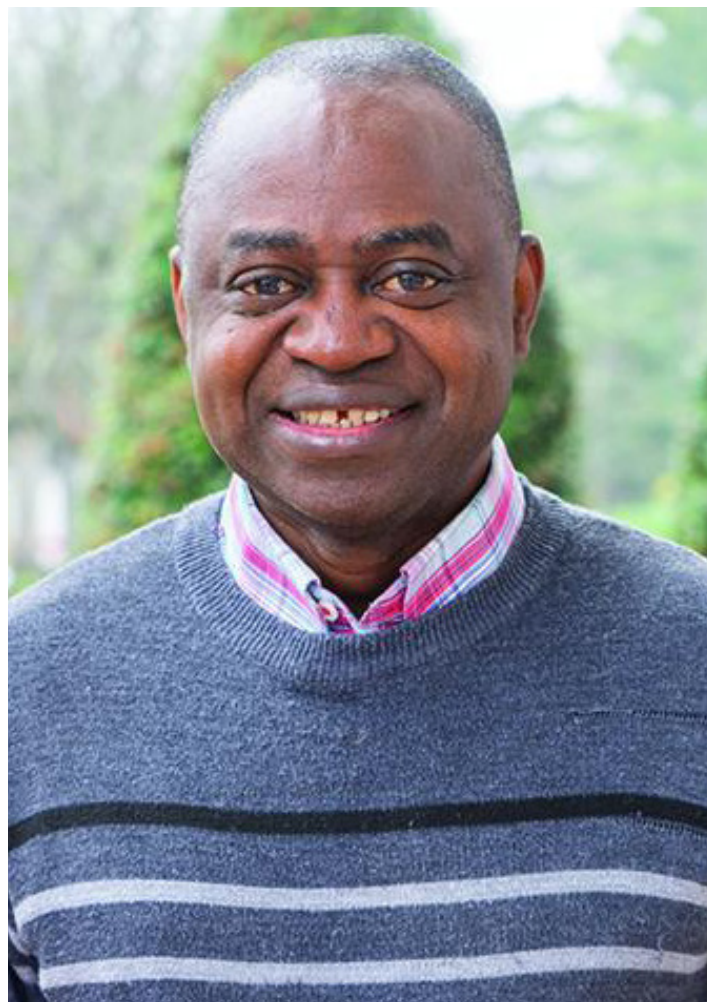
Olayia is among a select group of U.S. citizens who are teaching overseas during the 2023-2024 academic year through the U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program. The program helps professors in the United States to expand their professional networks and forge future partnerships between institutions.

Notable Fulbright alumni include 62 Nobel Prize laureates and 78 MacArthur Fellows. More than 400,000 participants from more than 160 countries—like Olaiya—have been chosen for their academic accomplishments and potential with the goal of providing them with opportunities to exchange ideas and contribute to finding solutions for communities across the globe.

"Anderson University is proud of Dr. Olaiya for this remarkable achievement and grateful for the Fulbright U.S. Scholar program's recognition of his expertise and passion," said Ryan Neal, provost at Anderson University. "Dr. Olaiya is uniquely qualified, not only because of his

"Dr. Olaiya is uniquely qualified, not only because of his academic credentials and professional achievement, but also because of his passion for building bridges across cultures."

Ryan Neal



Associate Professor of English Kolawole Olaiya is the recipient of a 2023-2024 Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award. (AU Photo)

academic credentials and professional achievement, but also because of his passion for building bridges across cultures."

Olayia is an honors graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University in Osun, Nigeria, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in dramatic arts. He earned a master of arts degree in English from the University of Maiduguri in Nigeria and a doctorate from the University of Toronto.

Olayia has taught English, literature, writing and communication courses at Anderson University since 2015.

History professor receives Guittard Book Award

By AU Marketing & Communication

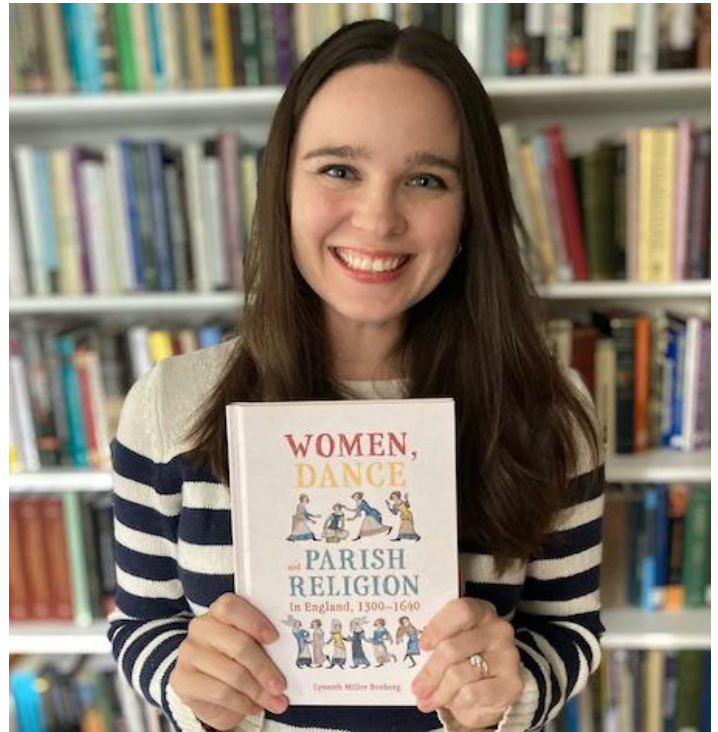
Assistant Professor of History Lynneth Miller Renberg's book, "Women, Dance, and Parish Religion in England, 1300-1600" has been awarded the 2023 Guittard Book Award.

The Guittard Book Award, given by Baylor University, recognizes the best book published during the previous year by a current or former Baylor faculty member or alumni. Miller earned her doctorate in history at Baylor.

Renberg's book, published by Boydell and Brewer, examines a time when dancing moved from being an accepted, regular part of Christian worship to become viewed by church officials as sinful and worthy of severe punishment.

"When I received notification that I'd won the Guittard Award, I was told that an independent panel of judges assessed the deep pool of entries this year, and my book was judged the winning book," Renberg said. "One judge praised its combination of 'high' and 'low' history as the 'standout book in this collection.'"

"Women, Dance, and Parish Religion in England, 1300-1600" also won the Founder's Prize from the Sixteenth Century Society and has been featured in Church Times and on Medievalists.net.



Assistant Professor of History Lynneth Renberg shows off her new book, "Women, Dance & Parish Region in England, 1300-1600."w The book recently received the The Guittard Book Award, given by Baylor University. (AU photo)



Anderson University student teams were recently recognized for their work over the past year with Palmetto Awards by the South Carolina Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators. AU Communication students received an Award of Excellence for a public relations campaign on behalf of Thrive Wellness and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention promoting last spring's suicide prevention walk; an Award of Excellence for a public relations research project on behalf of Meals on Wheels of Anderson; and an Award of Merit for Synthesis, the student-produced magazine of the College of Arts and Sciences. Representing AU at the awards luncheon were, from left to right, Isabella Ellis, Madilyn McCown, and Skylar Bruner. (IABC photo)

SYNTHESIS

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International best-selling author and popular speaker Dacre Stoker, great-grandnephew of “Dracula” author Bram Stoker, visited AU Nov. 9 to give a public talk on his famous relative’s family history, the writing of the famous 1897 novel and its continuing influence on popular culture. While on campus, Stoker also visited Associate Professor of English Katherine Wyma’s Literary Criticism and Research class, where he led students in a paleography exercise using Bram Stoker’s own handwritten notes. Stoker is at center right on the front row. (AU photo)