



INFOCUS

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With civil liberties and justice for all



Alum strives for equity as
the director of the Wisconsin
affiliate of the ACLU

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Serving with SMART thanks to Department

Serving others is a guiding value for Lily Levrault. She regularly volunteers through UWM's Honors College, and she serves as a teacher for the Girls Who Code Program. And after she graduates, Levrault will have a full-time job serving her country.

Levrault is a SMART scholar, one of a handful of students across the country who was awarded a Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation ([SMART](#)) [scholarship](#) by the U.S. Department of Defense. The award supports students majoring in STEM fields by paying full tuition, giving annual stipends, placing students in government internships, and guaranteeing a full-time job with the Department of Defense after graduation.

Of course, Levrault is grateful for the opportunities and monies she's been granted, but there's a deeper meaning behind her scholarship. She's carrying on a family tradition.

"My grandfathers were both in the Air Force," she said. "(This) is a similar sort of service, but without necessarily being in the military. So, there's definitely pride that, hey, I'm doing this too."

A SMART scholar

Levrault is an Illinois native and grew up on the Missouri border. For high school, however, she attended the Illinois Math and Science Academy (IMSA) in the suburbs of Chicago, pursuing her passion for numbers.

"I already had an interest in actuarial science, and at IMSA I started learning computer science and coding. Those were the two majors I was looking at while looking at colleges," she said.

UWM had both, and her language of choice to boot. Levrault is double-majoring in actuarial science and applied mathematics and computer science, alongside a minor in Russian.

She applied for the SMART scholarship during her freshman year and has been enjoying the benefits ever since, including two summer internships. Levrault spent this past summer in Springfield, Virginia, interning with the [National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency \(NGA\)](#).

"I was a data scientist, basically working on the automation of repetitive tasks – data monitoring without needing a human to check on it every hour," Levrault explained.

The NGA collects and analyzes geospatial intelligence data – think weather reports, aerial and satellite

RT: Mathematics student gives back ent of Defense scholarship



Lily Levrault (third from left) stands with her fellow Honors College students after volunteering with Make A Difference Day this fall. Levrault often volunteers and finds service important. Levrault's UWM studies are supported by a full scholarship from the Department of Defense, which provides her with an avenue to serve her country. Photo courtesy of Lily Levrault.

photography, maps, and more – to support the United States' national security and that of its allies.

Naturally, that's a lot of data. It's a big world, and analysts can't watch everywhere at once. In particular, Levrault was charged with automating processes that collected data about radio signals, heat signatures, infrared, and other signals. She instructed her code to send an alert to an analyst any time those measurements saw a significant change, so the analyst did not have to constantly monitor those signals.

"I worked with a good team," Levrault said. "There was a poster fair at the end of the summer where we (she and a fellow intern) got to present our project to a lot of different people and be the expert (to) these people who have worked at the NGA for years. That has a sense of pride to it."

Service close to home

At UWM, Levrault is still giving back. This semester, she worked as a mentor with the program Girls Who Code, which teaches the fundamentals of computer coding to middle and high school girls. Once a week, Levrault taught her students the basics of Arduino, which uses a single-board microcontroller to control digital devices.

Levrault is thankful that she began learning to code in high school and that she's been able to continue her computer science education at UWM. So, she said, it feels important for her to give other girls those same opportunities.

"If they don't know about (coding) now, they're not likely to try and study it later on. That exposure is necessary in order to get more girls into tech and computer science fields," she said.

On top of that, Levrault volunteers with the UWM Honors College, and even spent last Spring Break in New Orleans doing service projects. Giving back has always been an important part of her life.

"Growing up, it's just something that we do," she said with a shrug.

Thanks to her SMART scholarship, Levrault has a guaranteed job after she graduates this coming spring. She's been invited back to her team at the NGA, and she hopes to work out of the agency's St. Louis office so she can be close to home as she serves her country.

By Sarah Vickery, College of Letters & Science

The history of family history: Profe

When Xin Yu's grandfather passed away, he left his grandson an interesting heirloom: A family genealogy, written in classical Chinese.

Yu was intrigued. "There were a lot of stories, a lot of legends. I wanted to figure out which parts were facts and which parts were fictional, which parts were reliable," he said.

What started as a personal quest turned into an entire academic pursuit. Yu, who is from China and just completed his PhD studies at Washington University in St. Louis, is a visiting assistant professor at UWM. His research centers on the [history of Chinese genealogies](#), just like the one his grandfather gave him.

His work has revealed some fascinating facts about not only Chinese genealogies, but the course of world history. Here are the facts you need to know.

1. Chinese genealogy looks much different from western genealogy.

Yu studies genealogies that were produced between 1450 and 1644. These genealogies were printed books made through a careful process of compilation and editing. They resembled personal history books as much as they did family trees.

But these aren't the family trees that most people might be familiar with.

"In America and Europe, the genealogy is self-centered. That means, if you want to write a genealogy, you start with yourself, then your father and mother, and then your four grandparents," Yu observed. "But in China it was totally different."

That's because the Chinese genealogies that Yu studies are ancestor-centered. They focused on one particular ancestor and then traced that person's descendants, often for centuries.



Xin Yu

Unsurprisingly, these genealogies were sweeping histories, recording the lives of hundreds or even thousands of descendants.

"For example, in my family, the genealogy was centered on a figure living about 600 years ago," Yu said. "If the genealogy in the United States and Europe resembles a tree with yourself at the bottom ... in Chinese genealogy, the ancestor was at the top and all else would be on the bottom branches."

2. The genealogies developed because people wanted to know their family.

Before the 15th and 16th centuries, Chinese genealogies looked similar to today's. But in the 1400s, a new development changed the landscape: the emergence of large-scale social organizations that included kinsmen living in the same villages or communities.

"They not only identified with the same ancestor, but also, they had a lot of connections in their real life. They have shares in common property," Yu said.

"It was because of the emergence of this type of kinship organization that people wanted to know who the other members were in that group. It was a community-building effort that led people to have a new type of record that would help them keep track of everybody in that community and to specify a relationship with their ancestors."

In fact, Yu said, entire villages where many people shared the same surname were involved in searching for a common ancestor so that they could establish familial bonds. These books were hugely important for their makers; Yu noted that even people who could not read still worked with the books and spent large sums of money to fund their creation.

"Genealogies were ritual objects. They were put in ancestral temples to be revered by everyone, and oftentimes people were able to see it once a year during a very important festival devoted to ancestor worship," Yu said.

By the 19th and 20th centuries, almost every family, on down to Chinese peasants, had their own genealogies.

3. Some of the stories are made up.

Of course, the people who recorded these genealogies relied on memory that usually spanned only three or four generations – about 100 years. Some families were lucky and had documentation that detailed their histories up to 300-400 years in the past.

"For ancestors who are really far back, they had to rely on fiction. They just fabricated a lot of (these stories) to show that they knew a lot about their ancestry," Yu said.

Stories followed common themes, chief among them migration: Many

Professor explores Chinese genealogies



(Top) These genealogies from the Ming Dynasty in China are bound with cloth and paper covers. (Left) The title page of a genealogy. The printers used a piece of red paper to make the title page. The characters in the top frame read, "Recompiled in the fifth year of the Guangxu reign," and the five large, bold characters read "respectfully printed by the Hall of Luoman." Photo courtesy of Xin Yu.



genealogies claimed an ancestor had migrated from the north of China to the south. In premodern China, the northern region of the nation was seen as a desirable place to live, but pressure from occupying Mongols and other groups pushed many Chinese people southward, where they established new regimes and ruling classes.

"On the local level, many people wanted to incorporate that kind of narrative into their own history. They wanted to ... show that they were descendants of the northerners instead of the southerners," Yu said. In the same way that Americans or Europeans may try to search for family connections to distant royalty, "People would try to connect their own history to the imperial history or the history of those who really had power," Yu added.

4. They were made long ago, but these genealogies are still in use today.

In almost every Chinese village, you can find these elaborate genealogies, though the form of the text has changed as language and writing have evolved. As a consequence of the Chinese Revolution in the twentieth century, however, many ancestral temples have been demolished and printed genealogies no longer have the impact they once had.

Even so, people today are still interested in genealogy. Services like 23andMe and Ancestry DNA have opened up new avenues for genealogical research—though they do present a problem.

"In the Chinese context, adoption happens a lot," Yu said. "Even though people lived in the same village and claimed that they descended from the same ancestor, actually, their genetic connection was not always strong. Many people wanted to erase traces of adoption from their genealogy."

Instead, Chinese genealogy relies much more on a common narrative rather than actual genetics.

5. This work is important because it shows how historical events impacted actual people.

The elaborate printed books of genealogies that Yu studies would not have been possible without the adoption of printing technology. That's important, he says, because it shows another avenue of history that the west often ignores.

"Because of the invention of printing, everything changed. ... Printing enabled the circulation of knowledge and individualism in Europe," Yu said. "But in the Chinese case, it's totally the opposite. Printing helped consolidate the dominance of kinship organizations over individuals. Individualism was not a natural outcome of printing."

"Printing itself would not bring about democracy or individualism. It is the use of printing by groups of people that generate its meaning," he added.

Genealogies are also important because they give a glimpse at the human impact of historical events — like wars, famines, or pandemics. In his family's personal genealogy, Yu noticed the deaths of many of his ancestors in the 1860s.

"It was the almost-destruction of the entire lineage during the [Taiping Rebellion](#), which is a very important civil war in China. Almost everyone was killed," Yu said. "In southern China, over 50 percent of the population was killed during that civil war, and I saw it in (my own) genealogy."

Yu is the David and Diane Buck Visiting Professor in Chinese History in UWM's History Department. David Buck, a professor emeritus of history at UWM, and his wife created the professorship years ago in hopes of making the study of Chinese and Asian history a permanent fixture at UWM.

By Sarah Vickery, College of Letters & Science

In pursuit of civil liberties: WGS a

When she was appointed as executive director in January 2022, Dr. Melinda Brennan became the first woman of color to lead the Wisconsin affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union.

“It doesn’t feel like a breaking ceiling,” she said. “There’s freedom and being lost when you’re the first. ... In some ways, you’re free because you get to make it up. You have to have a good team around you to bounce ideas off of so that you know that you’re making better choices. And in another way, it’s a great abyss because your experience in the role will not match up with history. You have to build your own compass.”

Brennan’s compass has been pointing in new and exciting directions since she started the job.

“There’s a lot of work to do,” she said. “The day-to-day is endlessly learning new things and refusing to be intimidated by them.”

The role of the ACLU

The American Civil Liberties Union is a nonpartisan organization that seeks to safeguard civil liberties and civil rights for all. People may be most familiar with the group’s legal arm, which was long brought court cases that have defined the scope of Americans’ constitutional rights. But the ACLU does essential work outside of the courtroom, too.

“If you’re doing it right, at any given ACLU across the United States, you’ll find a depth of community engagement. Another piece is advocacy. The third piece is legal intervention,” Brennan said.

For Brennan, those tenets mean meeting with constituencies across Wisconsin to determine the problems, lobbying legislators to drop bad bills or shape them to have more just outcomes, and using legal action to secure the best outcome for the individuals or groups they represent.

In particular, the Wisconsin affiliate of the ACLU is focused on reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ rights, racial justice, carceral reform, immigration, and environmental justice.

Many of these issues seem to fall to one side of the political spectrum or the other, but the ACLU is a nonpartisan organization. Brennan wants to ensure her team protects the civil liberties and civil rights of all Wisconsinites, no matter their voting record. And, she added, many of the issues the ACLU of Wisconsin strives to address are nonpartisan, despite how many have tried to color the issues.

“(For example), there are lots of people who feel very strongly that books should not be banned in schools. To say otherwise is to try and stop people from being able to make up their own minds about what they believe in and how they want to live their lives,” Brennan explained. “Quality education with the freedom to be able to read and think for yourself is actually not a partisan issue.”

Being a leader

Brennan’s first year as executive director has been a busy one. She’s made several changes to the organization, starting with building a bigger team. Among them is another UWM student and alum: Brennan highlighted



alum leads the ACLU of Wisconsin

the work of her community engagement director [Justice Grau](#), who is working toward her Master's in Community Engagement and Education.

"There's a lot of work to do. It needs many hands, so people are less fatigued by it," Brennan said. "That (also) means putting community engagement at the center of our work. Community engagement should be the beating heart of the organization."

Brennan wants to work with community members and partner nonprofits to understand local communities' needs. Community engagement also means informing people about their choices in upcoming elections and giving them information about their voting options, or bolstering other organizations that can provide direct support to individuals in need. Brennan has also been excited to see the return of the Legal Observer training program and Know-Your-Rights trainings, which the ACLU of Wisconsin had to pause during the COVID-19 pandemic.

She's also challenging how her staff approaches their work by asking them to approach civil liberties and civil rights intersectionally, rather than separately.

"My intervention at the ACLU of Wisconsin has been to resist what is called 'bucketing.' That's thinking of an issue as a singular, separable thing," she said. "If you're going to talk about reproductive justice, you should be talking about what that looks like if you're incarcerated as well. You can't take about racial justice without talking about economic justice. ... And if you do, you unfortunately leave out critical pieces you should address."

That aligns with her emphasis on a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Even the ACLU of Wisconsin has work to do, she said, in making sure they "walk the walk" even as they "talk the talk."

A local understanding

Brennan is a Wisconsinite. She grew up in Port Washington, a second-generation Mexican-American and a queer woman with multiple disabilities who majored in women's and gender studies at UWM.

"I remember when I took my first WGS course, and my teacher was Dr. Cheryl Kader, who has since retired. I was in that class, and I thought, I want to do what she's doing," Brennan recalled.

Kader facilitated thoughtful discussions between her students, who came from very different backgrounds with equally different political beliefs. Brennan credits that class with setting her on her path – first toward a Master's in sociology from UWM, then a PhD in gender studies from Indiana University, and then as a faculty member at



Melinda Brennan majored in women's and gender studies at UWM and also earned her Master's in sociology. She is now the director of the Wisconsin affiliate of the ACLU. Photo courtesy of Melinda Brennan.

SUNY Oneonta, where she spent four years building the Women's Studies Department.

Eventually, Brennan and her partner moved back to Milwaukee to be closer to family. Brennan briefly returned to UWM as a program administrator for the WGS program before mentors and friends urged her to apply to the ACLU of Wisconsin. The executive directorship had just opened up.

Now, she works every day to implement the lessons she learned at UWM to help the ACLU of Wisconsin further its work.

"You should be able to learn from anything or anyone, whether you learn what they intend or not ... and you'll be better for it," she said. "Critical thinking is crucial for having a well-lived life, and that means considering the beliefs you were raised with."

In the meantime, she and her team are gearing up for the Wisconsin State Supreme Court race in April and continuing their work in community engagement.

Brennan smiles and sighs as she contemplates the months ahead. "So, we'd better get to work then."

By Sarah Vickery, College of Letters & Science

Economics and Africa: Alum m

The [International Monetary Fund](#) is a global organization meant to foster economic cooperation and fiscal stability across its 190 member countries. To do that, the IMF relies on an army of talented economists, accountants, and others to help advise and set fiscal policies the world over – people like UWM alumna Monique Newiak.

Newiak, who earned her Master's degree in economics at UWM, is an IMF representative stationed in the west African country of Sierra Leone. In her many years with the Fund, Newiak has met with presidents and policy makers throughout Africa to help grow the economies of several nations. She's also an architect of policies aimed at addressing the economic impacts of climate change, gender parity, and income inequality.

Newiak sat down to talk about her work in Africa with the IMF.

For the people who may not be familiar with the International Monetary Fund, what does the IMF actually do?

An aerial view of Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone.
Photo by David Hond.

(Our mission) is safeguarding the exchange rate stability and avoiding balance of payment issues. That implies also having a domestically stable macroeconomy. Anything that will prevent vulnerabilities to the economy or sharp depreciation of the exchange rates, everything that will avoid financial distress to a country, is within our mandate.

We are expanding into new areas as well. We realized that some of the topics that were not under IMF's traditional agenda are actually very relevant to economic stability within countries.

Such as?

An example is climate change. It's not as slow-moving as we would hope, and it will have impacts on fiscal balances and on the severity of natural disasters, which in turn affect the economy. And income inequality – if society is very unequal, there is more socioeconomic instability within the country.



Monique Newiak

My absolute favorite is gender equality. We have shown that empowering women and making sure that *everybody* in the country can develop their full economic potential is something really important for how countries perform.

There is research to suggest that the fastest way to lift a population out of poverty is to financially empower the women within it.

Exactly! I'm very proud because when I joined the Fund, the institution was just moving on from the impact from the 2008 global financial crisis. My first job, around 10 years ago, was putting together an approach on how we advise countries on income inequality and gender equality. I spent a lot of time with colleagues to make that link between women's economic empowerment and access to equal opportunities for girls, and macroeconomics – whether that's

akes global impact with IMF

growth, income inequality, financial stability, or economic diversification. We just put out the IMF's first strategy on gender equality.

For example, in Sierra Leone, where I am working right now, we did analysis on how closing gender gaps in education would impact the economy, income inequality, revenue mobilization, and so on. Then we presented that to the authorities to advise them on their policy making.

How did you come to be stationed in Sierra Leone? It's a long way from Milwaukee to western Africa.

I was born and raised in Germany. My mom is Russian and Ukrainian and my dad is German, so we are a nice mix. I started studying in Germany in my hometown, Potsdam. I was studying for business administration. I was supposed to be an accountant or an auditor. But I soon realized that something bigger, more holistic, more economy-wide, would make more sense.



Sierra Leone is shown in green.

At the time, University of Potsdam had a partnership with UWM – a one-year Master's exchange program. That one-year experience changed my mind in terms of where I wanted to go professionally. The courses were really enlightening.

After that, I decided I would go for a PhD in economics in Munich, Germany. ... My PhD supervisor said, 'Why don't you try the World Bank and IMF, just to see if you like it?' I was like, okay, why not? Fortunately, the IMF made me an offer. I thought that maybe after three years I would go back to my beloved academia and write papers. Obviously, 10 years later, it did not really happen that way.

What went "wrong"?

I realized it was a fantastic opportunity to work with country authorities. In my first country assignment, I was placed in the Strategy Policy Review Department, but you would also get an assignment for a country, working mostly on external sector issues, balance of payment issues, and sustainability as well.

Ghana was the country I was assigned to. Our analysis mattered. We had access to all levels of policy making. On our first visit to Ghana, we got to meet the president. He signed his book for me, and I was very proud. We got a chance to present our thinking and it seemed to make an impact. ... It doesn't mean that the authorities or the government always agreed with what we were saying, but it was a real dialogue.

I wanted to stay with Africa. After that, I worked with the West African Monetary Union – it was a francophone assignment and my French is bad, but I somehow managed. I signed up for all sorts of country missions in the region too. I went separately to Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Rwanda, and Republic of Congo. All of the countries have different issues, but all have a very close dialogue.

I think there is a tendency to think of Africa as one large, poorer continent. Obviously, that is not case. What do the economies of different countries really look like?

[Continued on Page 10](#)

Alum at the IMF

[Continued from Page 9](#)

It's super diverse. You have high-income countries like the Seychelles and Mauritius, which are high-end tourist paradises. You have a lot of commodity-exporters, like oil exporters. You have the relatively more developed southern end of the continent with South Africa, of course, and Botswana.

You have Senegal which is more a frontier market already issuing Eurobonds. It has booming real estate. The prices are insane. You have Nigeria – I worked in Nigeria at one point – and it's a huge country with 200 million people. It has several states, and depending on where you go in the country, things look completely different.

In the east, I worked on Rwanda for a bit, which has made tremendous progress after the civil war and the genocide. That country has achieved (so much) in terms of creating a business environment, growth, reduction of waste – don't dare to bring a plastic bag to Rwanda. They will kick you out with your plastic bag!

And Sierra Leone?

Until a month ago, Sierra Leone was still on our list of 'most vulnerable' countries, which is also the reason I wanted to be here. It's one of the poorest countries in the world – around \$500 GDP per capita. You can calculate that down to how much a person has on average has per day. They have made tremendous progress in reducing maternal death and childhood mortality, but the statistics are still really quite depressing. It's very vulnerable to climate shocks – four years ago, they had mudslides. It's very vulnerable to epidemics. Maybe you remember in 2014-15, there was the Ebola health crisis that affected Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

It's a very import-dependent country as well. They're trying to develop their own economy, but in any shock that comes through the outside – for example, during COVID with the supply chain disruption – the authorities need to make sure imports can come into the country because Sierra Leone does not produce enough food to feed the whole population.

You obviously care deeply about Sierra Leone. What do you like about your station?



People travel the road from Kenema to Kailahun District amidst Sierra Leone's lush landscape. Photo by Lindsay Stark.

If you're flying into the country, it's amazingly green. It looks so juicy! There are fantastic beaches, wonderful seafood. The city is very busy. It's really, really beautiful. I feel very sorry that most people think only about the economic challenges and poverty, which is extremely important – but the beauty of the country is just amazing. In a couple of years to a decade, this could really be a beautiful tourist paradise if you develop it right.

What does it take to be successful in this job?

It depends on what you're doing. I think everybody, especially after coming out of university and having learned economic principles, has very strong ideas about how things should be done. But we often don't see the political economy or context and the practical considerations.

For me, what is really helpful is to listen to what the country authorities want first, and not to come with prejudice. What is their priority and how can we support that? Programs are more successful when they are driven by the country authorities. I think listening and understanding the country's and then acting on that (is important). Especially for a country like Sierra Leone where there are a lot of institutional challenges. ... How do you work around that? Accepting second-best in policy making (is important).

Do you have any advice for students who might be interested in working with the IMF?

If anybody wants to or is interested in the fund, I'm very happy [to talk](#) at any point in time.

By Sarah Vickery, College of Letters & Science



Kate Riordan (left) and Natalie Hernandez at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning

When Panthers mentor Panthers

Natalie Hernandez felt disconnected. It was fall 2020, COVID-19 was in full swing and she was taking virtual UWM courses from her parents' home in Illinois. She was also doubting whether she should continue pursuing her architecture major.

Then came the lifeline: a UWM Alumni Association email about its Mentoring Program. "I thought, 'You know what? I feel like I need a mentor,'" says Hernandez, a first-generation college student. So she signed up.

The Alumni Association paired Hernandez with Kate Riordan, a city of Milwaukee transportation planner. Riordan, who earned a UWM master's degree in urban planning in 2013, spent a lot of time talking to Hernandez about her own career and her projects at work. She also served as a reassuring sounding board for Hernandez.

It was exactly what Hernandez needed and exactly what the Alumni Association envisioned when launching the program in spring 2020. "Just to have that emotional support then was great," Hernandez says. "She helped me when I was deciding to change majors from architecture to urban studies. She went through the whole emotional roller coaster with me."

It would be a full year before Hernandez and Riordan could meet in person, but their partnership has now passed the twoyear mark. They're one of the Mentoring Program's 50 active matches.

Riordan's mentorship goes beyond nuts-and-bolts tasks, like providing feedback on Hernandez's resume, preparing her for job interviews and helping build a professional network. She also understood Hernandez's struggle with settling on a major and helped talk her through it.

"My first piece of advice for Natalie was to be sure you get what you want out of school," says Riordan, who wished she'd spent more time pondering whether to pursue her own bachelor's degree in business.

Hernandez has developed a renewed sense of confidence in her urban studies degree, which she's on track to earn in 2023.

And her conversations with Riordan provided a better understanding of what urban planning entails, which led to a new appreciation for why people would want to work for a city.

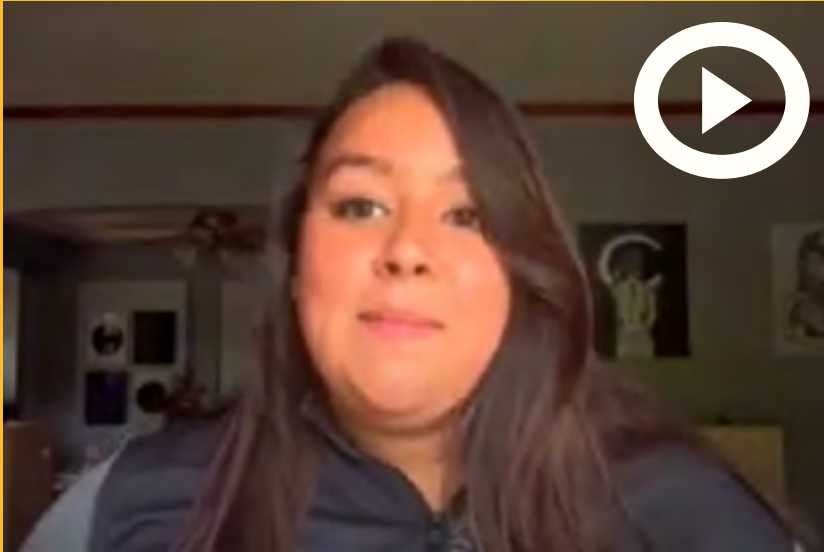
"You get to reach a lot of different communities and have a positive influence," Hernandez says.

The Mentoring Program welcomes alumni wanting to help current students. Learn more at alumni.uwm.edu.

By Laura Otto, University Relations



Video Stories



Eliza Priest ('19, BA Global Studies) used her education and internship experiences with the Global Studies program at UWM to springboard to her career with Sazerac, a multinational liquor company. Priest is a market development representative in the Milwaukee area and credits the skills she learned at UWM for much of her success.

<https://youtu.be/8I-LdBV2Q3E>



UWM's wide range of academic programs (more than 200!) and supportive professors set our campus apart. **Audrey**, a **classics major** from Illinois, discovered that firsthand after transferring from another university and changing her major after taking a life-changing class with her now-advisor. She's made strong bonds with other students, been active in campus clubs, and more. <https://youtu.be/wREOeBJH4xQ>

Alumni Accomplishments

William Engermann ('85, BA International Studies) was appointed an associate judge for the **Kane County 16th Circuit** in Illinois.



William Engermann

Engermann was previously a prosecutor in the Kane County State's Attorney's Office, where he served as the deputy chief of the Criminal Division and head of the Major Crimes Unit.

Cassandra Bretl ('19, BA Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies) joined **The Creative Company**, a PR and digital media company, as a public relations media specialist. Bretl was previously an award-winning on-air anchor and journalist with WREX-TV in Rockford, Illinois.

Eric Hurd ('07, BA Economics) was named Senior Vice President – Chief Lending Officer of at **BankCorp of Wisconsin**. He has 22 years of experience in the industry.

Sandra Sweeney ('85, BA; '10, MA History) published a new novel in September, titled "**Morning Train North: Margie**" which explores a family tragedy set against a 1902 train ride from southeast Wisconsin to Lake Superior. Sweeney has authored several other books involving Wisconsin.



People in Print

Maria Novotny (English) published an article, "**Social Justice Conference Planning for Writing Studies: Frameworks, Triumphs, and Challenges,**" with three other colleagues who work in writing studies across the U.S. and Canada.



Laurels and Accolades

Pamela Harris (Mathematical Sciences), along with collaborators from Carnegie Mellon University, Tuskegee University, and Iowa State University, were awarded \$997,128 through an NSF grant for their project entitled, "[A Postdoc Community of Mentoring and Networking](#)."

Graduate student **Diana Ilencik (Sociology)** is a co-author on a paper that will be published in *New Media & Society*. The paper is entitled, "Too Human and Not Human Enough: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Mental Health Harms from Emotional Dependence on the Social Chatbot Replika." The honor comes just two months into her graduate education.

Brittnie Peck ('19, PhD Communication) and **Erin Sahlstein Parcell's (Communication)** article, "Talking about mental health: Dilemmas U.S. military service members and spouses experience post deployment" was selected by the Family Communication Division of the National Communication Association as the winner of the 2021 Journal of Family Communication Outstanding Article Award. They were recognized at the annual convention in November. The article also was named a finalist (top 5 out of 488 articles reviewed) for the 2022 Barbara Thompson Award for Excellence in Research on Military and Veteran Families, given by the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University in partnership with Military REACH at Auburn University. They will be recognized for this honor at a ceremony in December.

Rachel Buff (History) was honored by the [Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee](#) in November, recognizing her work in advocating for gender equity and building solidarity to ensure advances for all women.

César Ferreira (Spanish and Portuguese) was elected as a member of the [North American Academy of Spanish Language \(ANLE\)](#). The ANLE is one of twenty-four members of the [Association of Academies of the Spanish Language](#), an institution that brings together the language academies of Spain, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea, Puerto Rico, the United States, and nineteen Latin American Countries.

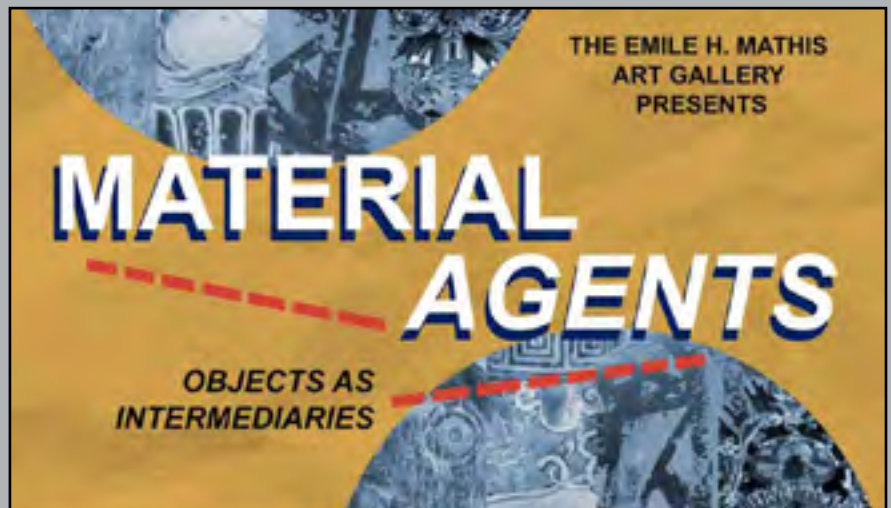
Upcoming exhibition at Emile H. Mathis Art Gallery

The Emile H. Mathis Art Gallery in UWM's Mitchell Hall will present a new exhibition titled, "Material Agents-Objects as Intermediaries" opening Dec. 8.

This exhibition explores the social action of artworks, artifacts, and material and visual culture from the UWM Art Collection and is co-curated by students and faculty from the "Intro to Art Museum Studies II" class.

Inanimate objects take on social agency as nexuses that draw together people across time and space, serve as portals to separate realms of being, or both. As earthly intermediaries, objects facilitate relationships between individuals and communities. The results are syncretic aesthetics that reveal both harmony and tension in interpersonal connection. As portals to other realms, objects are conduits by which people and communities transcend the physical sphere to spiritual realms. With more than 40 objects in the exhibition, the curators assert that while objects might seem inanimate, they are powerful agents in connecting beings in the material and spiritual worlds.

The exhibition is free and open to the public.



What: Emile H. Mathis Art Gallery Exhibition "Material Agents - Objects as Intermediaries"

Where: Emile H. Mathis Art Gallery, UWM Mitchell Hall Room 154

When: Dec. 8 - March 31; Monday-Thursday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Opening Night: The show opens Dec. 8 from 5-7 p.m.

More Information: Visit the Art Gallery's [website](#).



In the Media and Around the Community

They spin webs and have surprisingly good memories: **Clint Sergi ('22, PhD Biological Sciences)** explained to [Wired Magazine](#) how people have long underestimated spider cognition. Sergi also gave a nod to his mentor, **Rafa Rodriguez (Biological Sciences)**.

Genelle Uhrig ('19, MS Biological Sciences) was profiled in the [Zanesville Times Recorder](#) for her role as the ecology director of The Wilds, a private, nonprofit safari park in Cumberland, Ohio.

UWM held its first Home Movie Day in October, allowing community members to come and have old home recordings restored or digitized. [CBS 58 News](#) talked to **Tami Williams** and **Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece (both Film Studies)** about the event.



As a federal judge halted the Biden Administration's plans to forgive some student loan debts, **Rebecca Neumann (Economics)**, via [Fox 6 News](#), urged borrowers to have a repayment plan in place. She also spoke about the impact of inflation on the price of

Thanksgiving dinner via [CBS 58 News](#).

Kimberly Blaeser (emerita English) read some of her recent poetry at the Laureate Writers Series at the [Blue Heron Coffeehouse](#) in Winona, Minnesota, in November.

[People Magazine](#) quoted **Paru Shah (Political Science)** in an article analyzing Ron Johnson and Mandela Barnes' campaign strategies ahead of the November midterm election. Also ahead of the election, she spoke on the diversity of views among Latino voters in the [Wisconsin Examiner](#) and people's frustration with inflation in [On Milwaukee](#).

In the same [On Milwaukee](#) article, **Kathleen Dolan (Political Science)** speculated on how much the media influences voters' concern with certain issues.

[The Nation](#) reviewed **Carolyn Eichner's (History and Women's & Gender Studies)** book, "The Paris Commune: A Brief History" (Rutgers University Press, 2022).

Jeffrey Sommers (African and African Diaspora Studies and Global Studies) penned an op-ed for the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) questioning Tim Michel's proposal for a flat tax and published "The Flat Income Tax: the Worst of Many Bad GOP Proposals on the Docket in Wisconsin" in [CounterPunch](#) on Nov. 7. He was also the feature interview on [The Analysis](#), "Why the Soviet Union Imploded (part 2)" on Oct. 14.

David Petering (emeritus Chemistry and Biochemistry) spoke at the "Climate Change; Origins, Impacts, Solutions" forum hosted by the [League of Women Voters](#) of Milwaukee County in November.

Fox 6 News reported that every name carved on the Vietnam Wall now has a photograph to go with it - thanks in part to the efforts of **Jessica McBride (Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies)** and her students.

McBride and **Michael Mirer (Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies)** also speculated on what Elon Musk's changes at Twitter might mean for users on [CBS 58 News](#).

Amanda Epping ('12, BA; '16, MS Anthropology) has a unique job: she is a research coordinator with the Ape Initiative, an organization dedicated to the preservation of bonobo monkeys. [Little Village Magazine](#) profiled Epping and the organization.

On [CBS 58 News](#), **Sarah Vigeland (Physics)** and **Jean Creighton (Planetarium)** explained some of the university's groundbreaking research with NANOGrav, an international collaboration of scientists studying gravitational waves.

Robin Pickering-lazzi (Italian) penned an article on the life of Letizia Battaglia, a Sicilian photographer who relentlessly documented the crimes of the Italian mafia. The article was run in numerous publications, including on [Yahoo! News](#).

Sarah Finn ('20, MLIS; '22, MA History) was profiled in [Fine Books and Collections Magazine](#) as part of the publication's "Bright Young Librarian" series. Finn is an archival projects librarian at the Milwaukee Public Library.

Karyn Frick (Psychology) appeared on the podcast "[Beyond the Paper Gown](#)" in November. She spoke about menopause and the work of Estrigenix and her UWM lab to develop treatments for symptoms of menopause.

Demand is growing for environmental scientists. **Neal O'Reilly (Conservation and Environmental Science)** highlighted the trend in the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#).



Upcoming Events

December 6

Clube Lusófono: Words From SÃO TOMÉ E PRÍNCIPE with Olinda Beja. 4:30-5:45 p.m. [Online](#). Olinda Beja, a writer from São Tomé & Príncipe, shares her experiences through her writing. This event connects with Portuguese 310 class “Advanced Composition and Conversation.”

December 7

Center for 21st Century Studies Conversations: Grants Workshop. 12-1:30 p.m. Curtin 939. Michelle Schoenecker and Anne Kissak (Office of Research and Sponsored Programs) present. See more details [here](#).

December 8

Women’s & Gender Studies Lunch & Learn with Leah Wilson. 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Curtin 181 and [online](#). Leah Wilson, UWM, presents “Queer (Re)Orientations: Reclaiming Our Bodies, Our Selves.”

The French Table. 1-2 p.m. Curtin 766. Join the UWM community to practice your language skills with informal conversations in French. All levels welcome.

Catch Your Breath Under the Stars – mindful stargazing at the Planetarium. 2-2:30 and 2:30-3 p.m. Manfred Olson Planetarium. Faculty, staff, and students are invited to de-stress at the Planetarium.

December 9

Honors College Monster Conference. 12:30-4:30 p.m. Students present research addressing “monstrous” topics. Attend in person or via [Zoom](#).

DECEMBER 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24

December 9

Exploring Exoplanets with the James Webb Space Telescope. 7-8 p.m. Manfred Olson Planetarium. The James Webb Space Telescope will serve as the premier deep space observatory for the next decade. Masks recommended. Ages 4 and up. [Tickets](#) are \$6 general/\$5 for students.

December 13

C21’s Drop by for a Donut. 9-11 a.m. Curtin 939. Graduate students are invited to drop by the Center for 21st Century Studies offices for donuts, bagels, coffee, fruit, and tea for a study break. Register [here](#).



Pictured on the panel

Jeffrey Sommers (Global Studies and African and African Diaspora Studies) was an invited panelist for the conference “Tackling the Rise of Living Costs,” hosted by the Institute for International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University (sponsored by the German Social Democrats and Foundation for European Progressive Studies) on November 3-4. Sommers is pictured third from the left. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Sommers.



UWM hosts State of Milwaukee Summit

On Nov. 17, UWM hosted the State of Milwaukee Summit, a panel that explored “Covid 19 and Racial Equity: What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go from Here?” The Summit’s panelists included Joel Brennan, president of the Greater Milwaukee Committee; Ellen M. Gilligan, president and CEO of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation; David Crowley, Milwaukee County executive; and Cavalier Johnson, mayor of Milwaukee (pictured above in order with UWM professor and director of Urban Studies Joel Rast at the podium).

UWM Chancellor Mark Mone delivered the opening remarks before panelists began a discussion of the impact of the pandemic on our neighborhoods and communities. They addressed the ways in which COVID-19 magnified existing inequalities, how city and county government services were affected and the role of the public sector, the health of area businesses and community organizations, and how the lessons learned from the pandemic can be applied in the future.

The Summit was organized in part by the Urban Studies program.

Milwaukee mayor Cavalier Johnson speaks at the State of Milwaukee Summit at UWM on Nov. 17.



UWM Chancellor Mark Mone speaks with a guest at the State of Milwaukee Summit.

