09/09/14
Gary Carden, “Folklore Becoming History”
Session will focus on notable examples of this region’s history in which the folklore attending notable people and events have “become” accepted as history. Gary Carden will draw examples from personages such as Dr. John R. Brinkley, the “goat gland doctor” and T’sali, the Cherokee martyr who allegedly died so that a group of Cherokees could avoid the Trail of Tears.

Gary Carden is a Sylva native who was raised by his grandparents. Carden graduated with a degree to teach English, which he did for 15 years in Georgia and North Carolina before returning to Western Carolina University for his masters in English and drama. In 2008, the university awarded him an honorary doctorate. Carden has in the past decade started receiving long-due recognition: Mason Jars in the Flood won the Book of the Year Award in 2001 from the Appalachian Writers Association. Two of Carden’s dramatic monologues, “Prince of Dark Corners” and “Nancy Dude” have been filmed and appeared on PBS and the Discovery Channel. He’s also a winner of the Brown-Hudson Award in Folklore (2006) and the North Carolina Literature Award (2012).

09/16/14
Jim Costa, “It’s Evolutionary, My Dear Watson”
In 1859 Charles Darwin published On the Origin of Species, a book that was to revolutionize the biological sciences. At the same time he feared it was going to shake society to its very foundations — and he was right. But what was so upsetting about Darwin's theory, then and now, and just what did Darwin say (and not say) about the subject? In this presentation we'll explore these questions as well as the nuts and bolts of what is perhaps the most important yet least understood scientific theory of all time — Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. Along the way we’ll trace Darwin's path to discovering the theory, touch on the discoveries that emerged in the following century to extend and clarify it, and consider the latest frontier as we enter the age of genomics.

Jim Costa is Executive Director of the Highlands Biological Station in Highlands, North Carolina, USA and Professor of Biology at Western Carolina University, where he has been a faculty member since 1996. An entomologist with a special interest in social evolution, Jim has studied insect societies in the US, Latin America and Europe. Through his entomological interests Jim is a long-time Research Associate in Entomology at Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology, and in 2004-2005 was named Jeanne Rosselet Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. He is the author of The Other Insect Societies, published by Harvard University Press in 2006. In 2009 Harvard University Press published The Annotated Origin — Jim’s annotated edition of On the Origin of Species, designed to guide readers through
the historical context, structure, and content of Darwin’s masterwork. More recently, as a fellow of the Berlin Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin, Germany, Jim completed two books on Alfred Russel Wallace — renowned 19th-century tropical explorer and naturalist, founder of evolutionary biogeography, and co-discoverer with Darwin of the principle of natural selection.

09/23/14
Ron Rash, “A Reading and Discussion with Ron Rash”
In this session WCU author Ron Rash will read and discuss his work. There will also be a question and answer period.

Since the appearance of his best-selling first novel One Food in Eden (2002), Rash has published prolifically with five novels, four short story collections, and four volumes of poetry over the last twelve years. Celebrated as one of “the hardest working writers in America,” Rash’s fiction and poetry have received many of the region’s, the nation’s, and the world’s most prestigious literary honors, including the Appalachian Book of the Year Award, the James Still Award, the Sherwood Anderson Prize, the O. Henry Prize, and the Frank O’Connor Award for best international short fiction.

09/30/14
Chris Cooper, “Election 2014”
A discussion of trends related to state and federal politics with specific focus on what the 2014 election may tell us about the future.

Chris Cooper is professor and department head in Political Science and Public Affairs and Professor (by courtesy) of Psychology. He is the recipient of the WCU’s highest honors in research (University Scholar) and teaching (Board of Governors Award for Teaching Excellence). He was also named NC Professor of the Year in 2013 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. His research addressing campaigns and elections, state politics, political psychology, and southern politics has appeared in over 30 journal articles and book chapters. He is also a frequently sought after media source and has been quoted by NPR, the Raleigh News and Observer, Asheville Citizen Times, and many other outlets.

10/07/14
David Reeves, “Doing Good and Being Good”
Exploration of Biblical and other ancient notions of “good” and how it is and has been a moving target.

David Reeves was an EMT-Paramedic for Haywood EMS and Westcare from 1986 to 2013. He currently serves as the Senior Pastor at Cullowhee United Methodist Church. He has a B.A. degree in Religion, Philosophy and English from Greensboro College and a Master of Divinity degree from Duke University.

10/14/14
Roger Turk, “Easy to Find Native Plants (and their kiss’n kin) for Use in Your Home Landscape”
This program will be a discussion of easy to find and easy to use native plants for your home landscape. Discussion and photos will focus on the growing trend of utilizing native trees and shrubs in home landscape plantings. This will be an informal presentation for novices, those who don’t wish to admit to being a novice, and for those who just love plants and landscaping.
Roger Turk is the Grounds Superintendent at Western Carolina University where he has had the pleasure of working for over 25 years. In his capacity he is responsible for all landscape maintenance, landscape installations, landscape design development, greenhouse color crop production, trash collection, recycle operations, snow removal and the mechanic shop operation. His staff is responsible for keeping the 500 acre campus looking its best 24/7/365 for the students, faculty, staff and its visitors. Prior to coming to WCU Roger had 15 years’ experience in the private sector working for landscape installation companies, a landscape architectural/land planning firm and his own business. Roger holds a BS degree in Landscape Design and Ornamental Horticulture from Auburn University.

10/21/14
Darrell Parker, “From Economic Forecasts to Market Forecasts to Investment Decisions”
This discussion will focus on the current economic outlook, readings to stay current on potential changes in the economy, inherent risks in trying to use broad economic trends for individual market forecasts, and strategies for individual investment choices.

Dr. Darrell Parker is the Dean of the College of Business at Western Carolina University. Prior to coming to Western Carolina, Parker was Dean of the Johnson College of Business and Economics at USC Upstate. At Georgia Southern, Parker held the William Freeman Distinguished Chair of Free Enterprise and served as Director of the School of Economic Development. He previously served as professor of economics at Winthrop University, where he established and directed the Winthrop Economic Development Center. An economist by training, he received his Bachelor’s degree from UNC Asheville and a Masters and Ph.D. from Purdue University.

10/28/14
Jeffery Vickery, “Taking the Path Well Blazed: Day Hikes Near and Not-so-far”
WCU is in the middle of some of the best hiking trails in the Southeast. Literally hundreds of miles of trail are accessible by an hour’s drive or less. During this session, Jeffrey Vickery will discuss some of his favorite hiking trails in and around the WNC area starting with those closest to WCU including: the new WCU trail system, Panthertown, some “local knowledge” trails, and sections of the GSMNP and Pisgah National Forest. While the trails vary in length, each one is in whole or in part accessible as a day hike without the need to camp overnight. We will also discuss some tips and ideas for what to do while hiking, the 10 best things to carry on a day hike, and trail safety.

Since 2002 Jeffrey D. Vickery has served as co-pastor of Cullowhee Baptist Church alongside Tonya Vickery to whom he has been married for the last 25 years. Why a pastor besides a sense of divine calling? Because he believes the church still matters in the world today. In order to prevent mental decay, Jeffrey also teaches as an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at WCU. Whenever he’s not preaching or teaching, he’s a proud father to two fabulous and talented teenage daughters. Just for fun he loves to be on a trail going as far as possible, and then back again, before the sun goes down. In short, he loves living in Cullowhee, NC.
11/04/14
Gene McDowell, “Living While Dying”
Interesting facts about death; gender differences, generational differences, and more.

Eugene McDowell holds B.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Developmental Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the M.S. degree in Experimental Psychology from DePauw University in Greencastle Indiana. He was employed as Assistant Professor of Psychology at UNC Greensboro, 1965-69, as Professor and Head of the Psychology Department at Western Carolina University, 1969-82, as Director of the Asheville Graduate Center at UNC Asheville, 1982-97, and again as professor of Psychology at WCU, 1997-2007, before retiring as Professor Emeritus. McDowell’s research interests focus on Death & Dying, Grief & Bereavement, and Suicidology. He and his colleague, Judith Stillion, have published approximately 30 research articles on these topics, plus two editions of a book entitled, Suicide Across the Life Span: Premature Exits.

11/11/14
Robin Oliver, “Social Media, Smart Phones and How to Connect to the Next Generation”
Whether you have yet to set up a Facebook account or you are a savvy digital user with a smart phone in your pocket, come to this session for some tips and tricks on how to better use today's technology to stay connected to family members across the globe. In addition to talking about digital connectivity tools, we'll also cover some popular smart phone apps geared toward topics such as travel, shopping, investment management and more. Bring your lap top, tablet and/or smart phone so we can help you get set up for social connectivity, and be prepared to join the discussion and share your own tips on digital strategies that have worked for you.

Robin Oliver joined Western Carolina University as director of marketing and oversees the Office of Creative Services, including university branding, design and advertising, and University Print Services, including the campus Print Shop and PawPrint Services. Oliver is a former vice president at a full-service advertising agency in Birmingham, Ala., and her clients have included several universities, government agencies, publicly funded organizations and large corporate entities such as Verizon Wireless and Advance Publications. She is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with bachelor's degrees in English literature and music performance.

11/18/14
Don Livingston, “Conservatism and Liberalism in Contemporary America”
What’s the story about conservatism and liberalism? What does it mean when the terms conservatism and liberalism are used to describe politics in contemporary America? Do labels tell one much at all about the agendas and actions of political leaders, engaged citizens, organized interests, and institutions within the American political arena? How does political self-interest relate to conservatism and liberalism? Let’s look into this!

Dr. C. Don Livingston grew up in Orangeburg County, South Carolina. He earned both his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees at the University of South Carolina and received his Ph.D. from The University of Mississippi. Dr. Livingston began his teaching career at East Central Oklahoma State University in Ada, Oklahoma. He is beginning his 31st year at Western Carolina University this fall. Dr. Livingston has served as a Department Head and Associate Dean at WCU and is a full professor of Political Science and Public Affairs. He has published in prestigious scholarly journals and has been a finalist for a variety of teaching awards at
Western. He takes great pride in having been selected by students to receive the Last Lecture Award.

12/02/14
Mary Ann Lochner, “Buyer Beware”
An interactive discussion about the most common problems affecting senior consumers, including automobile lemon laws, charitable organization fraud, credit scams, "phishing" and other identity theft scams, health care, and basic contracting skills.

Mary Ann Lochner joined Western Carolina University as Associate General Counsel in February 2004 and has served as General Counsel since August 1, 2010. Prior to her employment with the university, she practiced exclusively in the areas of healthcare law, tax-exempt organizations, and non-profit corporations. She served as Vice President and General Counsel at a Catholic hospital in Florida, Senior Attorney in a large, national law firm specializing in healthcare mergers and acquisitions, and Senior Staff Attorney in a tax-exempt public interest law firm. She is a 1985 graduate of Indiana University School of Law.