Spring 2024 Schedule
Cullowhee, Main Campus (Wednesdays, 10am – 12pm)

January 17, 2024
**Dr. Casey Hurley – Developing an Educational Philosophy**

**Biography:**
I attended K-12 Catholic schools in Appleton, Wisconsin, and graduated from St. Norbert College in 1974. I taught English at my old HS for three years.

I earned a Masters in Educational Administration at UW-Madison and became an administrator in four different Wisconsin high schools from 1978-1988. My doctorate was granted in 1989, and I became a professor at WCU that fall.

I wrote "The Six Virtues of the Educated Person" in 2009. I realized people like to read stories more than philosophy, so I wrote "Improving Instruction: Best Practices Told Through Teacher Stories" in 2021. This second book gives voice to the creativity of K-12 teachers.

**Presentation Outline:**
This presentation will be a discussion among attendees.

- I will be asking questions triggered by the slides, which are quotations from several authors.
- The main questions driving the discussion from beginning to end are the following:
  - Which of the two philosophies do you favor (egalitarianism or elitism)?
  - If the answer is "blowing in the wind," what does that mean?
  - If Americans are mean, today, when were they not mean? (This audience has a lot of history.)
  - What can we do to get past our current divisions?

January 24, 2024
**Dr. Wes Milner – The Middle East**

**Biography:**
Wesley Milner is currently Director of Global Engagement and Professor of International Studies at Western Carolina University. As the chief international officer, Milner works with WCU faculty and the broader campus community to fulfill the goal of providing a global education for every student. Previously, he served as Igleheart Endowed Chair of Political Science and Executive Director of International Programs at the University of Evansville in Indiana.

Milner’s international experience includes serving as a visiting professor twice at both Harlaxton College in the UK and Tokoha University in Japan as well as research travel in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Eastern/Southern Africa. He was also a visiting professor with Semester at Sea, circumnavigating the globe in four months. Further, he has had the pleasure of traveling with students on short-term study abroad programs to Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

Milner’s career began in Washington, DC where he spent several years as a researcher for a government contractor, working closely with a number of security and intelligence agencies.
As a professor, his primary teaching role has focused on international relations courses such as International Law, U.S. Foreign Policy, Human Rights, Politics of the Global Economy, and Global Environmental Policy. His scholarship, which integrates globalization and broadly defined aspects of human rights, has appeared in Human Rights Quarterly, the Journal of Private Enterprise, Sociological Quarterly, International Studies and a number of edited books. Recently, his research has centered on displaced and refugee students.

January 31, 2024
Gayle Woody

February 7, 2024
Dr. Jeffrey Vickery – Christian Nationalism is Not Christian

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

Presentation Outline:
Christian Nationalism is neither Christian nor good for American democracy. Yet recent political and religious voices have sounded a new call for Christian nationalism while not even trying to hide their goals of giving Christianity priority and superiority in American culture and politics. We will discuss some of the historical language that feeds Christian nationalism and consider what the implications are for the First Amendment, religious minorities in America, faith and politics, and Christianity and culture.

February 14, 2024
Dr. Kevan Frazier

February 21, 2024
Dr. Dan Pierce – History of the Railroad in Western NC

February 28, 2024
Francis Owl-Smith – Quilts of Life and Eco Printing from the Cherokee Perspective

Biography:
As early as I can remember, I have always been around people who crafted. My maternal grandmother and my mother made homemade quilts and garments for our family. My father worked at the first factory in Cherokee, NC called “The Cherokees”. It predominantly made leather moccasins but also other craft items for sale in the tourist’s industry. My brothers and I helped in this endeavor at night by beading patterns into the top of the leather moccasins. This
was our source of a small personal income when we were children. So I’ve naturally always worked with creating handcrafted items and proudly consider it a positive aspect in my life. After getting married right after high-school and starting a family, I became a nontraditional student at Western Carolina University where I received my BS degree in 1983 and subsequently entered UNC School of Medicine and later a Residency in Anatomic and Clinical Pathology. This educational journey lasted nine years and I continued to find little bits of time to craft in various ways. Now that I’m retired, I can spend more free time to learn new techniques. Most recently I have learned more about natural dyeing and botanical printing on fiber as well as my long-time love of quilting.

I have 3 children and 3 wonderful grandchildren that are the greatest joy in my life. I love to travel. I am a past President of the WCU Alumni Board, the physician representative to Cherokee Indian Hospital Governing Board, a member of the Qualla Arts and Crafts Cooperative, and an active member of the Cherokee Quilters Guild. I belong to numerous Facebook art groups that keep me stimulated and interested in different types of media. I believe that having an interest in arts and crafts can help an individual stay active and healthier in the aging process.

March 6, 2024
Sarah Steiner – Shifting Understandings of Gender and Sexuality

**Biography:**
Sarah Steiner is a librarian at WCU, and she has been a part of the campus community since 2014. She grew up in the Florida Everglades and worked at Georgia State University Library in Atlanta for nine years, prior to moving to Cullowhee. Her areas of research interest include inclusive archiving, personnel management skills, and workplace culture. She is the co-founder of the LGBTQIA+ Archive project at WCU and is one of the founding members of Sylva Pride. She lives with her husband and daughter in Cullowhee and is bisexual.

**Presentation Outline:**
Have you noticed conversations about gender or sexuality are changing... and quickly? If yes, you aren’t alone. Please join us for an open and friendly intergenerational conversation with WCU students and employees on these topics. Have questions? Please bring them! The panelists will share their experiences and respond to your queries. The session will conclude with practical tips for your future conversations with your friends and family.

March 13, 2024
Drake Fowler – NC Arboretum

March 20, 2024
TBA

March 27, 2024
Dr. Chunyan Wang – Tea and Relations with China

April 3, 2024
Luncheon
Note to the membership:
The above are the topics and speakers selected by the Curriculum Committee. This may change based on speaker availability.