

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

# Scholars in Action

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021



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ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

**Our Vision:** To be widely recognized as a premier public university with outstanding teachers and scholars who prepare students to contribute to the world in a meaningful way.



**Dr. Missy Alexander**  
Provost and  
Vice President of  
Academic Affairs

Welcome to Western Connecticut State University's Scholars in Action program. Each fall and spring we bring together interdisciplinary groups of faculty to share research, conversation, and ideas. In a casual, moderated panel format, WCSU faculty present their most recent scholarship to faculty, students, and the public. This exchange of ideas fosters dialogue about innovative pedagogies, reveals common research interests, and promotes interdisciplinary understanding.

This program provides an opportunity to celebrate the diversity of scholarly endeavors pursued by our faculty. From new works of art, to grant funded research in the sciences, to the scholarship of teaching and learning, our faculty are deeply engaged in their disciplines. To see more of what our faculty do, check out the annual report on all Creative Activity on the Academic Affairs website <https://www.wcsu.edu/academics/>.

I'm proud to introduce you to the 2020-2021 Scholars in Action and to recognize the 2019-2020 Connecticut State Colleges and Universities Board of Regents of Higher Education Award Winners from WCSU. For more information visit <https://www.wcsu.edu/academics/>.

*Missy Alexander*



**Dr. Mohsen S. Alizadeh**

Assistant Professor  
of Justice and Law  
Administration

Dr. Alizadeh has examined 24 years of federal grants to identify shifts in emphasis in New York City programs for general policing, to community policing and homeland security. Dr. Alizadeh's presentation, *Focusing Events: Theory and Change in Policing Style*, shows that the terror attacks of 9/11 became a catalyst for public policy change moving policing programs in the direction of homeland security. Dr. Alizadeh joined the Division of Justice and Law Administration in 2016. He holds advanced degrees from Azad University of Rafsanjan, The City University of New York, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from the City University of New York.

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**Dr. Hasan T. Arslan**

Associate Professor  
of Justice and Law  
Administration

Dr. Arslan's presentation, *The Impact of Police Shootings in the United States on Police-Community Relations*, argues that a shift toward data-based policymaking and police training would improve police-community relations and provide support for a more rational public debate on sensitive topics. Dr. Arslan's research interests include homeland security and police use of force. He worked for nine years at the Institute for the Study of Violent Groups, where he served as analyst and supervisor in development of a database capable of tracking the more than 2,000 global and domestic extremist groups. He holds a law degree from Marmara University in Istanbul, Turkey, and a Ph.D. from the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University.



**Dr. Carina Bandhauer**

Professor and Chair of  
the Department of Social  
Sciences

Dr. Bandhauer is the author of *Identifying Racism as a Preface to Social Justice for LatinX Communities*, which examines the question of what makes anti-Latinx, anti-immigrant (and anti-immigration) discourse and actions racist. The issues of racism need to be clarified as a methodological tool before social justice can be obtained not just for these communities, but in general. Dr. Bandhauer is a sociologist who researches racism, particularly as it targets immigrants and the Latinx community more broadly. At WCSU she helped form both the UndocuAlly Task Force and the Racial Justice Coalition. She has also been an advocate for the people of El Salvador for more than 25 years. Dr. Bandhauer earned a Ph.D. at Binghamton University.

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**Dr. Stacey Hawkins**

Professor of Spanish

Dr. Hawkins has explored the literary representations of drug cartels and the narco-aesthetic that glorifies guns, gangs, and the money that is the lifeblood of organized crime in Central America. In *The Defense of Human Rights in Modern Mexican Narrative*, she focuses on the work of Antonio Ortuño, a Mexican journalist and novelist. His novel *La fila india*, unmasks racism in Mexico against Central American immigrants who are the victims of drug and human trafficking operations. Against the music, film, and narratives that glorify drug cartels, the cultural imaginary in Ortuño's novel empowers "other" voices, inviting readers to re-imagine a shared humanity. Dr. Hawkins has taught for 15 years at Western Connecticut State University and earned a Ph.D. in Spanish Language and Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



**Dr. Robyn Housemann**

Professor and Chair of the Department of Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences

Dr. Housemann is an advocate for holistic and alternative healing modalities. Her primary area of focus is in reducing chronic diseases by facilitating community-based interventions to increase physical activity, promote healthy eating, reduce smoking, and improve disease self-management. She joined the Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences faculty in 2006. She received her Ph.D. (SLU, 2000) in Health Services Research. In her presentation, *The Student Perspective: Factors that May Influence Student Retention in a Cohort Model in Public Higher Education*, she reported on the impact of a cohort approach to education on student retention rates. She studied the experiences of students who remained part of a defined cohort throughout their degree program to determine what may have influenced their decisions to stay through graduation. Dr. Housemann was a co-author on the Health Promotion Studies program accreditation self-study report for the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).



**Dr. Rainer Kroll**

Assistant Professor of Justice and Law Administration

Police have always tracked incidents of crime to inform policing policy to help departments respond to crime within their jurisdictions with targeted enforcement policies. In *Police Agency Use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in the Traditional Analysis of Crime*, Dr. Kroll analyzes the evolution of the practice from locating crime sites on maps with colored stick pins to modern GIS software to create maps and data-driven charts to inform policing policy. Dr. Kroll received his Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from the City University of New York, Graduate Center. He joined WCSU in 2018 after retiring as a lieutenant in the New York City Police Department.



**Dr. Laurel Larsen**

Associate Professor  
and Chair of the  
Department of Music

Dr. Larsen is the current chair of her department and teaches class piano, theory, sight singing, and piano pedagogy. She holds a doctorate in piano pedagogy from University of South Carolina. As a doctoral candidate, she was recognized for her teaching and academic excellence, winning both a William H. Nolte Graduate Assistant Teaching Award in 2005 and a Centennial Graduate Fellowship Award in 2007. For five years, Dr. Larsen taught piano and music theory at the Cobb County Center for Excellence in the Performing Arts in Mableton, Georgia. The music theory and sight-reading texts that she wrote during her tenure there are now available through Masterworks Press and have been adopted by more than five hundred high schools worldwide. Her Scholars in Action presentation, *How Collaboration and Coordination Between Music Faculty Improves Student Success in Core Music Classes*, explores the educational benefits of harmonizing instruction in music theory, sight singing, and class piano.

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**Dr. Karen McLean**

Associate Professor  
and Chair of the  
Department of Social  
Work

Dr. McLean provides an overview of a panel presentation she participated in as a member of the Diversity Committee of the National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter, on *Understanding Cultural Humility Through the Lens of Micro, Mezzo, and Macro Practice*. Cultural humility is a reflective, life-long process of recognizing the uniqueness of individuals that challenges our own knowledge about what we “think we know” about people, groups, or cultures and encourages individuals to tell you “who they are.” She demonstrates how intervention strategies are developed at each level of social work practice. Dr. McLean joined WCSU in 2015 and brings more than 26 years of social welfare experience, both as a social worker and a fair hearings officer. She earned a Ph.D. from the School of Social Work at the University of Connecticut.



**Mr. Thomas Miller**

Assistant Professor,  
Justice and Law  
Administration

Attorney Miller discusses the legal framework for use of lethal force in the United States in his presentation, *The State of the Law Surrounding Use of Force*. He will examine laws and policies governing use of force by law enforcement agencies across a wide range of geographic locations and jurisdictions. He also will review the legal ramifications of these laws and policies and their potential impact on decisions regarding the use of force. Professor Miller graduated from WCSU with a bachelor's in Justice and Law Administration and earned a J.D. from the Regent University School of Law. He is licensed to practice law in state and federal courts in Connecticut.

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**Dr. Douglas O'Grady**

Professor of Music

Dr. O'Grady is currently Coordinator of Audio and Music Production and teaches music theory, electronic music composition, and audio production courses. Prior to his appointment at WCSU, he was Music Theory Coordinator at Georgia College and State University, where he taught all music theory and sight singing courses. Dr. O'Grady holds a DMA in composition from University of Alabama, where he studied composition with C.P. First and theory with Stephen Peles, as well as two Music Theory and Composition degrees from University of Louisiana at Lafayette and University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. In his Scholars in Action presentation, *How Collaboration and Coordination Between Music Faculty Improves Student Success in Core Music Classes* he outlines specific changes to standard keyboard exercises, realigned to complement and reinforce music theory topics and competencies in ways that have strengthened students' ability to transfer skills between music theory, sight singing, and class piano.





**Dr. Katherine Roe**

Assistant Professor of  
Education & Educational  
Psychology

Dr. Roe focuses on the relevance of students' cultural, community and family backgrounds to their educational experience in her presentation, *Supporting Student Assets and Demonstrating Respect for Funds of Knowledge*. The Funds of Knowledge concept in pedagogy recognizes that each student brings the assets gained from their personal experiences –family background, cultural heritage and daily life and work within the community – to the classroom. Dr. Roe is the coordinator of the Elementary Education program and edTPA (teacher performance assessment) implementation for education programs. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Walden University.

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**Dr. Lorraine Moya Salas**

Assistant Professor of  
Social Work

Standard definitions of trauma do not include historical and racial assaults; assessment and treatment approaches similarly are frequently “colorblind.” In *Trauma-Informed Care and Radical Healing with Latina/o Immigrant Families*, Dr. Salas considers the effects of both historical and racial trauma on Latina/o immigrant families. She also reviews the meaning of radical healing, which includes building on the resilience and healing strategies of Latina/o communities and assisting in the cultivation of a critical consciousness. Radical healing encompasses moving beyond coping with environments that traumatize toward liberation. Dr. Salas joined WCSU in 2017 with more than 30 years of social work practice and teaching experience. She earned a Ph.D. in Social Work from Arizona State University.



**Dr. Emily Stevens**

Professor and Associate Chair of the Department of Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences

Dr. Stevens conducts field-based research in physical activity promotion, including an examination of determinants of physical activity, the development and evaluation of theory-based interventions designed to promote physical activity, and measurement of physical activity behavior. She joined the Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences faculty in 2009. She completed her Doctor of Philosophy in Health Promotion and Exercise Science, at The Ohio State University (2006). Dr. Stevens was a co-author on the Health Promotion Studies program accreditation self-study report for the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). In her presentation, *The Student Perspective: Factors that May Influence Student Retention in a Cohort Model in Public Higher Education* she observed that understanding how students balance their time with competing demands, as well as satisfaction with academic and curricular opportunities, may provide insight into factors that could influence retention in public higher education.

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**Dr. Caroline Waldbuesser**

Assistant Professor of Communication and Media Arts

Dr. Waldbuesser draws upon her research investigation of instructional communication to discuss *Difficult Conversations in the Classroom*. Her talk will deal with strategies to conduct challenging and productive conversations with students related to often emotional topics such as politics, culture and mental health. The specific impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on students' mental health also will be discussed. Dr. Waldbuesser studies instructional, organization, and interpersonal communication with a focus on emotions and mental health. She earned a Ph.D. in Communication Studies from Ohio University.



**2019-2020  
CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGES  
AND UNIVERSITIES  
BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION AWARD WINNERS**

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**2019-2020**

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AND UNIVERSITIES  
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## **Board of Regents System Award for Faculty Research**

A single system-wide research award is given to the individual who best exemplifies high quality research among the four universities.



**WESTERN  
CONNECTICUT  
STATE UNIVERSITY**

**WINNER**

**Dr. Neeta Connally**

Associate Professor  
Biology and  
Environmental  
Sciences

## Board of Regents Faculty Teaching Award

A campus-based teaching award  
is given to the individual who best  
exemplifies high quality teaching.



**WESTERN  
CONNECTICUT  
STATE UNIVERSITY**

**WINNER**

**Dr. H. Howell Williams**

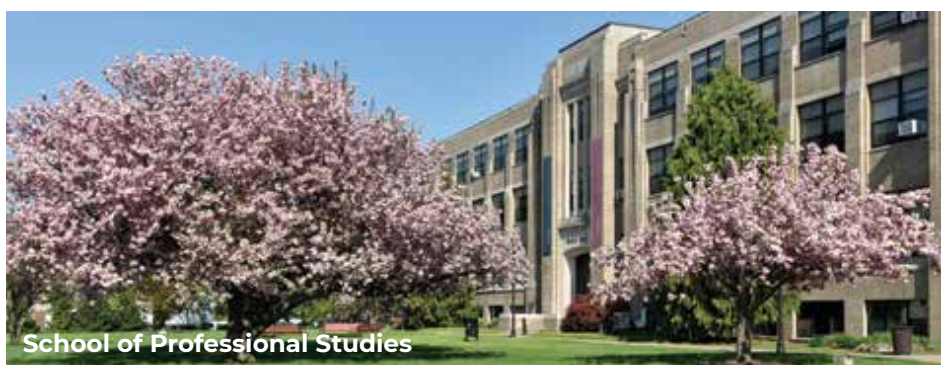
Assistant Professor  
Social Sciences



**Anzell School of Business**



**Macricostas School of Arts and Sciences**



**School of Professional Studies**



**School of Visual and Performing Arts**

## MISSION

Western Connecticut State University changes lives by providing all students with a high-quality education that fosters their growth as individuals, scholars, professionals and leaders in a global society.

### To achieve this, we

- Offer undergraduate and graduate programs that weave together liberal arts and professional education and instill a desire for life-long learning.
- Sustain a vibrant, inclusive campus that connects individuals through co-curricular programs, cultural events and service to the community.
- Attract student-centered faculty who are passionate teachers and accomplished scholars.
- Establish partnerships that create opportunities for internships, research and experiential learning

## VALUES

**Excellence.** We value outstanding achievement realized through persistence, effort, honest feedback and self-reflection.

**Curiosity.** We value the questions that drive learning, innovation and creativity, which serve as the beginning and the desired outcome of education.

**Dialogue.** We value the conversations that explore diverse perspectives and encourage shared understanding.

**Engagement.** We value the interactions with ideas, peers and community that are essential to a vibrant university environment.

**Opportunity.** We value the possibilities created by affordable, accessible educational environments in which students can grow into independent thinkers and confident leaders.

**Respect.** We value the right of all people to be treated with dignity and fairness and expect this in our policies, classrooms and community.

## VISION

Western Connecticut State University will be widely recognized as a premier public university with outstanding teachers and scholars who prepare students to contribute to the world in a meaningful way.



**Office of the Provost**

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