

# WCSA

A red starburst graphic with multiple sharp points, positioned to the right of the 'S' and overlapping the 'A' in the acronym 'WCSA'.

**WORKING-CLASS STUDIES ASSOCIATION**

“Class and Social Justice”



2025 Conference Program

University of Technology Sydney

December 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>

## Working-Class Studies Association (WCSA) Conference Program “Class and Social Justice”

Our conference will take place in [Building 11](#) (Faculty of Engineering and IT Building), University of Technology Sydney, Ultimo.

**Registration and Catering Area:** Registrations, morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea will take place in the foyer area outside CB11.00.401. A snacks table (with complimentary Aussie snacks, tea and instant coffee) will be available to conference delegates from 9.00am to 5.30pm each day.

**Quiet Space:** The Quiet Space in CB11.B1.101 is a dedicated safe, sensory-friendly environment primarily for those seeking some quiet and calm. This is not a study or social area. Open to all conference delegates.

**Social Area:** You are welcome to use the area outside CB11.00.401, or surrounding areas to meet and mingle.

**Study Spaces:** There are many study spaces down the stairs/escalators from CB11.00.401. You do not need to book these, but can use these spaces when required.

**Book Store/Exhibition Room:** There is a dedicated book store/exhibition room in CB11.00.100

**Cafe:** [Mrs & George Cafe and Bar](#) is located on Level 1 of Building 11 (one level up from the main conference floor). They serve great barista coffee and smoothies, and have other food and drinks available throughout the day.

*Abstracts and bios can be found under the conference program. You can also navigate quickly and easily between the program and abstracts/bios sections of this document by selecting on the presenter's name or you can bring up the Table of Contents (via 'View' 'Table of Contents' or the 'Expand Tabs and Outlines' option to make the left-hand menu visible.*

## Tuesday 2nd December

Session times	Location	Session Information
9.30-10:15	Foyer area CB11.00.401	Registration and Morning Tea
10.15-12:00	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Welcome to Country</b>  <b>Welcome from the Conference Convenors &amp; the WCSA President</b></p> <p><b>Keynote:</b>  <a href="#">Dr Graham Akhurst</a>, Senior Lecturer of Australian Indigenous Studies and Creative Writing, and Director of Indigenous Studies, School of Communication, UTS in conversation with <a href="#">Dr Jared Field</a></p> <p>“Storytelling for Social Justice”</p>
12.00-1.00	Foyer area CB11.00.401	Lunch (60 mins)
1.00-2.30	CB11.00.401 (and Zoom)	<p><b>Session 1A - USA Politics and Class - Panel</b></p> <p><a href="#">Jack Metzgar and Betsy Leondar-Wright</a>, “Talking Class in the Trump Era: Expanding WCSA’s Reach.”</p>
1.00-2.30	CB11.00.405	<p><b>Session 1B - Labour History</b></p> <p><a href="#">Kenneth Atkinson</a>, “The historical abuse of the working class: or how workers in the past have fought for social justice and what their struggles can teach us today.”</p>

		<p><a href="#">Tim Briedis</a>, “Red Hunter: Communist and working class histories in the Hunter, 1920s-1940s.”</p> <p><a href="#">Iain McIntyre</a>, “‘Get Wise!’: Cartoons, culture and education regarding direct action in the US Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1945.”</p>
1.00-2.30	CB11.03.301	<p><b>Session 1C - Media Representation</b></p> <p><a href="#">Katherine Kidd</a>, “The Reboot Capitulates: The Conners as a conservative continuation of Roseanne.”</p> <p><a href="#">Carol Quirke</a>, “Wither work and workers in swinging sixties and seventies”</p> <p><a href="#">Liz Giuffre</a>, “Is Bluey an Underdog? Children’s Television and Class.”</p> <p><a href="#">Jen Vernon</a>, “Placing Class at WCSA.”</p>
<b>2.30-3.00</b>	<b>Foyer area CB11.00.401</b>	<b>Afternoon Tea (30mins)</b>
3.00-4:30	CB11.03.301	<p><b>Session 2A - Housing - Film Screening</b></p> <p><a href="#">Franklin Thompson and Gretchen Purser</a>, “Raise the Roof: Building tenant power in Syracuse.”</p>
3.00-4:30	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 2B - Labour, literature and culture in the Philippines - Panel</b></p> <p><a href="#">Faye Cura, Glenn Diaz, and Vincenz Serrano</a>, “Labour in/as literary and cultural practices in the Philippines.”</p>
3.00-4:30	CB11.00.405	<b>Session 2C - Working-class Literature</b>

		<p><a href="#"><u>Stacey Roberts</u></a>, “‘Gets you right in the kidneys don’t it’: women’s bodies at work in Dorothy Hewett’s <i>Bobbin Up</i>.”</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Claudia Gioia</u></a>, “Illegal and enslaved: women in Swedish working-class graphic novels.” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Terry Easton</u></a>, “Threads of Justice: Textile Mill Novels of the 20th Century U.S. South.”</p>
5.00-6.30	Meet outside CB11.00.401	<p><b>Optional Excursion - Sydney Labour History Walking Tour</b></p> <p><b>This event is free for conference delegates</b></p>

## Wednesday 3rd December

Session times	Location	Session Information
9.00-9:30	Foyer area CB11.00.401	Registration
9.30-11:00	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 4A - Indigenous Research - Panel</b></p> <p><b>James Beaufils</b> and others from Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, UTS.</p> <p>Topic “Relationality and the Gift of Proximity: Comparative Reflections on Criminological Research Methodologies”</p>
9.30-11:00	CB11.00.405	<p><b>Session 4B - Financial/Workplaces</b></p> <p><a href="#">Matthew Sparkes</a>, “Stigmatisation and resistance: The plight of mortgage prisoners in the post-GFC era.”</p> <p><a href="#">Giorgos Gouzoulis</a>, “Financialization &amp; the Black-White pay gap in the United States.”</p> <p><a href="#">Christine Gallagher</a>, “Socioeconomic prioritisation in Australian workplace diversity and inclusion policies.”</p>
9.30-11:00	CB11.03.301	<b>Session 4C - Education</b>

		<p><a href="#">Cherie Madigan</a>, “Increasing Access: Creating a Working Class Lit Course with Open Educational Resources.” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Helen Lowe</a>, “The role of friendships in social class mobility: are schools doing enough to foster cross-class friendships for disadvantaged students.”</p> <p><a href="#">Miranda Mosier-Puentes and Elaine Szeto</a>, “‘Giving the world to each other’: photovoice perspectives on education from members of underrepresented communities.” (via Zoom)</p>
<b>11.00-11.30</b>	<b>Foyer area CB11.00.401</b>	<b>Morning Tea (60 mins)</b>
11.30-1.00	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 5A - Unions</b></p> <p><a href="#">Aggela Papadopoulou</a>, “Drivers of Trade Union Membership in Greece, 1970-2019”</p> <p><a href="#">Mark Hudson</a> (co-authors: Anupam Das, Ian Hudson, and Niall Harney), “Determinants of Unionization in Canada: Macro structure, policy mix, and the decision to organize.”</p> <p><a href="#">Paddy Gibson</a>, “Trade unions and the fight against Australian apartheid in the 1950s and 60s.”</p>
11.30-1.00	CB11.03.301 (via Zoom)	<p><b>Session 5B - Higher Education Participation - Panel</b></p> <p><a href="#">Elaine J Laberge</a>, “Pushing privileged pillars in Canadian universities: a widening access and participation model for poverty-class people”</p>
11.30-1.00	CB11.00.405	<p><b>Session 5C - Housing as social justice</b></p> <p><b>Community groups (TBC)</b></p>

1.00-2.00	Foyer area CB11.00.401	Lunch (60 mins) Optional Lunch Session: Talking Union (in CB11.00.401)
2.00-3.30	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 6A - Higher Education Pathways Australia - Panel</b></p> <p><a href="#">Sonal Singh and others from the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion</a>, UTS.</p> <p>Topic “Widening Participation Programs.”</p>
2.00-3.30	CB11.00.405	<p><b>Session 6B - Teaching as Advocacy</b></p> <p><a href="#">Kelly King</a>, “Is service-learning enough? Bordering Advocacy for Immigrant Youth in Japan.”</p> <p><a href="#">Michele Fazio</a>, “Archives as Advocacy: Creating Indigenous Data Sovereignty through community-based learning.”</p>
2.00-3.30	CB11.03.301	<p><b>Session 6C - Workers</b></p> <p><a href="#">Faye Cura</a>, “Work on the Books: Women workers and feminist publishing in the Philippines .”</p> <p><a href="#">Elizabeth Humphrys, Jesse Adams-Stein and Bettina Frankham</a>, “Class &amp; Clothes: Hi-vis workwear on the streets of Sydney.”</p> <p><a href="#">Mara Fridell</a>, “The Lessons of the Past Were Learned with Workers; Blood: correcting the crises of elite overproduction and antienlightenment patronage.”</p>
3.30-4.00	Foyer area CB11.00.401	Afternoon Tea (30mins)
4.00-5:30	CB11.03.301	<b>Session 7A - Higher Ed Workshop - Workshop</b>

	(and Zoom)	<p><a href="#">Rachael O'Connor, Nadine Cavigioli and Stacey Mottershaw.</a></p> <p>Topic "Adopting a class-conscious practice in higher education."</p>
4.00-5:30	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 7B - Class and Crime</b></p> <p><a href="#">Rachel Franks</a>, "The Death Penalty in New South Wales: How the justice system recruited the working class as a collaborator."</p> <p><a href="#">Shea Hennem</a>, "Are Incarcerated People Working Class?"</p> <p><a href="#">Mark Gawne</a>, "The 'Muck of Ages' and the 'Scum of Humanity': crime, class, moralities of contestation."</p>
4.00-5:30	CB11.00.405	<p><b>Session 7C - Working-class Community</b></p> <p><a href="#">Nysha Chantel Givens</a>, "Resisting Dominant Narratives: an ethnographic exploration of identity formation in black communities." (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Lisa McKenzie</a>, "Working Class Cultural Exchanges in East London and the Northern Mining Communities: class consciousness isn't dead yet."</p> <p><a href="#">Andrea McDougall</a>, "Neoliberalism and Social Housing: comparing approaches to social housing in Manitoba and British Columbia, Canada."</p>
6.00-8.00	CB11.00.401	<p><a href="#">Sweatshop</a> Author Showcase (sponsored by the Creative Writing Program, UTS)</p> <p><a href="#">Winnie Dunn</a> and <a href="#">Natalia Figueroa Barroso</a> in conversation with <a href="#">Michael Mohammed Ahmad</a>.</p>

		This event is free for conference delegates.
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## Thursday 4th December

Session times	Location	Session Information
9.00-9:30	Foyer area CB11.00.401	Registration
9.30-11:00	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 8A - Class and the Environment</b></p> <p><a href="#">Jackie Gabriel</a>, “After Coals Was King: Colorado’s Just Transition Bill and Coal ‘Transition Communities’.”</p> <p><a href="#">Mark Gawne</a>, “No Toxic Jobs: working-class environmentalism and proletarian health in the fight against capitalist toxicity at Port Kembla.”</p>
9.30-11:00	CB11.03.301	<p><b>Session 8B - Working-Class Literature</b></p> <p><a href="#">Clare Callahan</a>, “Song of the Poor: Negotiating worth in Anzia Yezierska’s <i>Salome of the Tenements</i>.” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Peggy D. Otto</a>, “Muriel Ruykeser’s <i>The Book of the Dead</i>: a counterguide for the tourist.”</p> <p><a href="#">Alicja Budzyńska</a>, “Coming of Age of Girls from Small Towns: the representation of class mobility in the contemporary Polish novels.” (via Zoom)</p>
9.30-11:00	CB11.00.405	<b>Session 8C - Working-Class Culture</b>

		<p><a href="#">Kristin Kovacic and Jim Daniels</a>, “Telling it True: personal essays on class cultures and identities.” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Jen Vernon</a>, “Class and Social Justice Poetry.”</p> <p><a href="#">Kristine Aquino</a>, “More than labour: Leisure cultures and city-making among Overseas Filipino Workers”</p>
<b>11.00-11.30</b>	<b>Foyer area CB11.00.401</b>	<b>Morning Tea (30 mins)</b>
11.30-1.00	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Plenary</b></p> <p><a href="#">Jackie Gabriel</a></p> <p>Topic “Working-Class Academics Section Presents: “Worker Displacement and Resilience: a case study of a prolonged lockout among grain processing workers in America's heartland.”</p> <p>Respondent: Mallorie Watts</p>
<b>1.00-2.00</b>	<b>Foyer area CB11.00.401</b>	<b>Lunch (60 mins)</b>
2.00-3.30	CB11.03.301	<p><b>“<a href="#">Here Out West</a>” Film Screening</b></p> <p><b>Introduced by: <a href="#">Vonne Patiag</a> (writer)</b></p> <p>Written by Nisrine Amine, Bina Bhattacharya, Matias Bolla, Claire Cao, Arka Das, Dee Dogan, Vonne Patiag &amp; Tien Tran; Directed by Fadia Abboud, Lucy Gaffy, Julie Kalceff, Ana Kokkinos &amp; Leah Purcell; Produced by Annabel Davis, Sheila Jayadev &amp; Bree-Anne Sykes; a Co-Curious &amp; Emerald Production.</p>

3.30-4.00	Foyer area CB11.00.401	Afternoon Tea (30mins)
4.00-5:30	CB11.03.301	<p><b>Session 9A - T-Bone Slim Book Panel - Panel</b></p> <p><a href="#">Owen Clayton (Zoom)</a>, <a href="#">Michele Fazio</a>, <a href="#">Scott Henkel</a>, <a href="#">Iain McIntyre</a> and <a href="#">David Roediger</a></p> <p>Topic “<i>The Popular Wobbly: Selected Writings of T-Bone Slim.</i>”</p>
4.00-5:30	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 9B - Queer Experience</b></p> <p><a href="#">Nathaniel Heggins Bryant</a>, “Queer Prison Work in the Birdman’s Looking Outward: a voice from the grave.”</p> <p><a href="#">Orion Ligget</a>, “Passing Through: a collection of queer and female road narratives.”</p> <p><a href="#">Natalie Krikowa</a>, “Subverting TV Tropes: working-class and queer representation in <i>Deadloch.</i>”</p>
4.00-5:30	CB11.00.405	<p><b>Session 11A - Education</b></p> <p><a href="#">Adj Marshall</a>, “Rethinking Social Mobility: why we don’t talk about it but need to!”</p> <p><a href="#">Iona Burnell Reilly</a>, “Exploring the Lives and Lived Realities of Working-Class Academics in Higher Education.”</p> <p><a href="#">Stacey Mottershaw</a>, “Social (In)justice in the Academic Pipeline for Working-Class Scholars.”</p> <p><a href="#">Stevie Downs</a>, “Becoming a Counselling Psychologist: an IPA study of working-class women’s experiences of doctoral training in the UK.”</p>

<b>6.30-9.00</b>		<b>Conference Dinner</b> <a href="#">Trades Hall Sydney</a> (entrance via 377 Sussex Street)
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## Friday 5th December

Session times	Location	Session Information
9.00-9:30	Foyer area CB11.00.401	Registration
9.30-11:00	CB11.03.301	<p><b>Session 10A - Media Representation</b></p> <p><a href="#">Melissa Boehm</a>, “The Post-Election Framing of the Working Class in the New York Time: a mixed method study” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Katherine Kidd</a>, “Invisible Resistance: Friendship between women in AMC’s <i>Kevin Can F*#k Himself</i>.”</p> <p><a href="#">Julie Assouly</a>, “American Rust: reclaiming the Norma Rae legacy in Bleak Pennsylvania.” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Shelly Asquith</a>, “Workers’ Experiences of Strikes in the Press.”</p>
9.30-11:00	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 10B - Working-Class Voices in Working-Class Studies - Panel</b></p> <p><a href="#">Barbara Jensen, Jack Metzgar and Sarah Attfield</a>.</p> <p>Topic “Working Class Voices, Working Class Lives: creative non-fiction on the lives of the working class.”</p>
9.30-11:00	CB11.00.405	<b>Session 10C - Resistance</b>

		<p><a href="#">Scott Henkel</a>, “Oligarchy in America: class and social justice in W.E.B. Du Bois’s <i>Black Reconstruction</i>.”</p> <p><a href="#">Robert M. Zecker</a>, “Mapping Old Left Radicalism on the Sidewalks of New York.”</p>
<b>11.00-11.30</b>	<b>Foyer area CB11.00.401</b>	<b>Morning Tea (30 mins)</b>
11:30-1:00	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Plenary</b></p> <p>Chair: <a href="#">Michele Fazio</a> Participants: Ashley Allen, Mason Schwenneker, Kristin Stowell and Sheena Holbrook</p> <p>Topic “Undergraduate Research in Digital Humanities Focusing on Representation of Labour and Indigenous Communities in the Federal Writers’ Project.”</p> <p>Respondent: Christopher Woolley</p>
<b>1.00-2.00</b>	<b>Foyer area CB11.00.401</b>	<b>Lunch (60mins)</b>
2.00-3:30	CB11.03.301	<p><b>Session 5C - Music</b></p> <p><a href="#">Joseph Varga</a>, “Popular music and working class alienation: the roots of right-wing populism.”</p> <p><a href="#">Gay Breyley</a>, “Class and social justice in Iranian hip hop.”</p> <p><a href="#">Sarah Attfield</a>, “Working-class participation in popular music.”</p> <p><a href="#">Tami Gadir</a>, “Singing Solidarity and Struggle: Labour Choirs, the Union Movement, and the Politics of Class.”</p>

2.00-3:30	CB11.00.401	<p><b>Session 11B - Class and Race/Ethnicity</b></p> <p><a href="#">Christina Ho</a>, “Expanding Opportunity: class, ethnicity and educational aspiration.”</p> <p><a href="#">Nancy Ann Caronia</a>, “Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli’s tapestry: weaving a multi-generation immigration journey from Italy to Australia through third-person memoir.” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Jeff. A. Cabusao</a>, “Working-Class Studies and Ethnic Studies: interconnected histories.”</p> <p><a href="#">Betsy Leondar-Wright</a>, “Class differences in racism/sexism views?”</p>
2.00-3:30	CB11.00.405	<p><b>Session 11C - Housing and Homelessness in Sydney - Panel</b></p> <p>Curated by UTS <a href="#">SOUL Award</a> students</p>
<b>3.30-4.00</b>	<b>Foyer area CB11.00.401</b>	<b>Afternoon Tea (30mins)</b>
4.00-5:30	CB11.401	<p><b>Session 12A - Union Activism - Panel</b></p> <p><a href="#">Paddy Gibson</a>, CFMEU, MUA, NTEU “Trade Union Struggle in Australia Today.”</p>
4.00-5:30	CB11.03.301 (and Zoom)	<p><b>Session 12B - Working-Class Literature</b></p> <p><a href="#">Angelica Belloli</a>, “Justice as Transaction: symbolic exchange and the moral economy of survival in Walter Greenwood’s <i>Love on the Dole</i> (1933).” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Magnus Gustafson</a>, “Cement as a Literary Motif in Swedish Working-Class Literature.” (via Zoom)</p> <p><a href="#">Owen Clayton</a>, “‘Stone walls do not a prison make’: identity in US prison writing.” (via Zoom)</p>

4.00-5:30	CB11.00.405	<p><b>Session 12C - What the #*&amp;! is happening in the US?</b></p> <p>Discussion session with Michael Zweig and others from the US.</p>
<b>5.30-6.00</b>	<b>CB11.00.401</b>	<b>Wrap Up Session</b>
<b>6:00 - until late</b>	<b>Meet outside CB11.00.401</b>	<b>LGBTIQA+ Social Event - Newtown Queer Pub Crawl</b>

## Tuesday Program Details

*Abstracts for presentations on Tuesday (in alphabetical order by first name of first author)*

### **Carol Quirke, "Wither Work and Workers in the Swinging Sixties and Seventies?"**

An accepted chronology among historians and art historians suggests that the documentary impulse of the New Deal era ended in the post-war, as photographers rejected reformist or radical representations of working and marginalized peoples, for personal, non-ideological representations. Rejecting this chronology, I argue that from the late 1960s, working-class peoples were a popular subject for U.S. photographers. The Guggenheim Foundation funded Bill Owens's *Working: I Do it for the Money*, a sardonic look at a broad swath of workers across class lines, largely from California, Larry Fink's *Social Graces*, which contrasted elite Manhattanites with working-class Pennsylvanians, and Chauncey Hare's *Interior America*, a bleak, antiseptic examination of workers' domestic spaces from across the U.S. This interest in photographs of working peoples has been neglected, but coincides with a resurgence of engagement in workers lives in mass culture, with the popularity of television sitcoms like *All in the Family*, films such as *Blue Collar* or *The Deer Hunter*, and Studs Terkel's *Working*. What messages about work and workers did these recognized photographers convey in their images? Do they represent all workers, or ethnic, white male blue-collar workers alone? Are these photographers communicating an apolitical message, as some maintain, or are they attuned to inequalities working Americans faced? How do they comment on class relations as workers come to be perceived as reactionary? Why has this interest in work and workers largely been neglected by historians and art historians? The paper is based on oral histories conducted by the author and archival research.

### **Claudia Gioia, "Illegal and enslaved: women in Swedish working-class graphic novels."**

My proposal for this conference is to explore how the centrality of the female figure has evolved within Swedish working-class literature over the years. Beginning with a brief historical overview of Swedish working-class women writers, highlighting authors such as Maria Sandel, Moa Martinson, Maja Ekelöf, Elsie Johansson, and Anneli Jordahl, the core of my analysis will focus on two seminal works: *Fem papperslösa kvinnors historier* (Histories of Five Undocumented Women, 2013) by Amalia Alvarez and *Wage Slaves* (2016) by Daria Bogdanska. These writers represent a new approach to narrating the experiences of immigrant and working-class women, specifically through the medium of the graphic novel. Over time, in Sweden, women have transitioned from occupying marginal roles in the working-class narrative to becoming central figures. They are no longer exceptions in the labor force. In today's collective imagination, the archetype of the male factory worker is gradually being supplanted by the image of a woman employed in domestic work or healthcare. This shift comes with added layers of complexity, as women in these roles often face not only exploitation and low wages but also gender and, frequently, ethnic discrimination.

**Faye Cura, Glenn Diaz, and Vincenz Serrano, "Labour in/as Literary and Cultural Practices in the Philippines." (Panel)**

Marxist scholars from the West and from the Philippines have long been problematising the relationship between labour, literature, and culture. Raymond Williams, for example, in critiquing the vexed relationship between base and superstructure, calls for an "adequate recognition of the indissoluble connections between material production, political and cultural institutions and activity, and consciousness" (80). Fredric Jameson's engagement with key Western Marxist literary and cultural critics calls attention to the methodological importance of "dialectical literary criticism," underscoring "not so much [the act of] solving the particular dilemmas, as at converting those problems into their own solutions on a higher level, and making the fact and the existence of the problem itself the starting point for new research" (307).

In the Philippines, labour is one of the key categories and concerns that inform the work of literary and cultural studies scholars. Delia D. Aguilar, for example, points out that only "within the broad framework of a speeded-up globalization" (148) can we make sense of the moribund situation of Filipino overseas contract workers. Even then, "mid-level analyses" of migrant workers' situations in "specific employing countries" as well as "micro-level" analyses of "the interplay of race, class, and gender" (148) in specific case studies need to be considered as well. E. San Juan, Jr. advances a "dialectical materialist analy[tical]" concept and method that can lay bare—given a globalised context—the "unequal power relations among nation-states" (278). Dialectical materialist analysis, for San Juan, contributes to exposing asymmetrical power relations that take the form of "subordination and domination, racial

exclusion, marginalization, sexism, gender inferiorization, as well as national subalternity” (278). Bienvenido Lumera underscores that from the late 1960s onward, “the politicized imagination of youthful writers” represented in their poems, plays, and stories the “most significant, long-standing social problems and issues of the times” (151). The question “For whom?” provided authors with a new ethical and political orientation: “[N]ow it was clear that [the author] was to serve [their] audience, that [their] work was supposed to advance the cause of the oppressed” (152).

The presentations in this panel—while grounding their analysis on key tenets in materially-oriented literary and cultural studies—focus on contemporary issues related to and impacting on the conference theme: publication institutions; environmental issues; translation practices. The manifold concerns taken up by the panel aim to illuminate the problems and prospects facing Philippine literature and culture; all told, the presentations hope to not just engage with the means of literary and cultural production but by so doing, expand and complicate its multiple meanings.

*Bios: Faye Cura is a poet, editor, translator, and the publisher of [Gantala Press](#), a feminist small press in the Philippines. She is also a peasant women advocate and helps in people’s campaigns for food security, peasant women rights and welfare, and national sovereignty.*

**Franklin Thompson and Gretchen Purser, “Raise the Roof: Building Tenant Power in Syracuse (USA)li.” (Film Screening)**

**Abstract TBC**

**Iain McIntyre, “Get Wise!': cartoons, culture and education regarding direct action in the US Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1945.”**

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) has a rich history of working class culture and education. Since its inception in 1905 the union has consistently promoted revolutionary industrial unionism as a means of achieving class and social justice. Historically, this approach, and allied concepts regarding class struggle and direct action under worker control, were developed and diffused via discussion and practice in union halls and hobo jungles, and during strikes, free speech fights and other activities. They were also shared, defended and discussed via formal channels of diffusion, including newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, conventions, and lectures.

This paper will explore a key field of learning, culture and debate within the IWW in the United States during the first forty years of its existence, cartoons. These were extensively featured in the union’s publications and also reproduced and distributed as postcards, posters and stickers. In producing thousands of individual works the IWW’s membership recast a cultural form more typically used to reinforce dominant economic and social ideas and practices and limit critique and activity to narrow parameters. IWW cartoons distilled concepts regarding class, campaigning and struggle into a simple, digestible and entertaining form. They exposed the depredations of capitalism and conveyed shared ‘common sense’ understandings regarding the necessity and practice of direct action to overcome them. Further to this, their production, on an unpaid basis by a large number of members, rather than by full time professional artists, embodied the union’s culture of rank and file creativity and participation.

*Bio: Iain McIntyre, University of Melbourne and [commonslibrary.org](https://commonslibrary.org)*

**Jack Metzgar, Betsy Leondar-Wright, “Talking Class in the Trump Era: expanding WCSA’s Reach” (Panel)**

Federal attacks on working-class and poor people and people of color have sharpened the attention of many Americans to class and race inequities, potentially widening the appeal of the Working-Class Studies Association. The WCSA webinar series Talking Class has attracted more than 300 non-WCSA members as registrants (as of January 2025; more by December). Particularly popular have been the guest speakers who are affiliated with national progressive organizations actively resisting the Trump

agenda (e.g. Community Change and the Poor People's Movement). In this presentation, Talking Class webinar convenors and facilitators Jack Metzgar and Betsy Leondar-Wright will talk both about the themes of the sessions AND reflect on this model of WCSA offering public events to extend our influence and recruit new members.

**Jen Vernon, "Placing Class at WCSA."**

In 2020 the WCSA conference committee's theme was "Re-Placing Class: Community...in a Changing World." Yet, we didn't know how our sense of place and community might shift through the pandemic and the take up of communicative tools like Zoom. Unable to gather with those nearby, some WCSA members connected with others far-away and had opportunities to rehearse ideals of international solidarity. How did this enlarge our sense of place and community for critical and creative activity in working-class studies? How did it present opportunities to further solidarity? As a WCSA practitioner working through this period, I'll share how we've used digital tools to claim working-class space in a hegemonic media landscape, sustain our organization, practice solidarity, and participate in the production of working-class culture.

**Katherine Kidd, "The Reboot Capitulates: *The Conners* as a conservative continuation of *Roseanne*."**

For the past six years, a colleague and I have self-produced a podcast entitled 714 Delaware Street, about the original series of *Roseanne* and its spinoff, *The Conners*. *The Conners* was a second continuation of the popular 1980s and 90s sitcom after the first reboot was cancelled due to the titular star's racist tweets. Roseanne Barr, known in the 1980s for her working-class feminist comedic point-of-view, as well as her sitcom's positive representations of LGBT characters (even before the "Gay 90's" were in full swing), alienated many fans when she publicly espoused a conservative political viewpoint, made anti-transgender and anti-Muslim statements, and ostentatiously supported Donald Trump for president in the 2016 U.S. election. The abrupt cancellation of the first reboot, which lasted only 9 episodes, stirred the show's other stars to reform the show around the premise that the fictional Roseanne Conner, played by Barr, had died. This, too, was controversial, and was viewed as an effort to stifle a conservative voice and serve a liberal agenda on television. Ironically, we have found, through the run of our podcast, that *The Conners* capitulates to the conservatism that it seemingly intends to reject, and it takes a soft stance on economic and social issues. This is entirely

unlike the original series, which was bold in its progressivism. It is also, strangely, more distinctly conservative than the second reboot, which included Roseanne Barr and acknowledged her politics. This presentation will be part of a project to convert our podcast into a book.

**Kenneth Atkinson, "The Historical Abuse of the Working Class: or how workers in the past have fought for social justice and what their struggles can teach us today."**

The topic of social class and the struggles of labor activists to improve the well-being of the working class continues to attract media attention. This is largely because the increasing number of successful labor strikes brings greater public awareness to the contemporary plight of working-class people who lack financial security and safe working conditions. However, what is less-well known is the history behind this current activism, namely the contributions of the working class in antiquity who have fought for social justice and in the process created the ethical foundations of Western civilization. Their struggles, accomplishments, and failures have much to teach us today as we are still waging their battles. This presentation highlights four historical incidents: the world's first industrial strike in ancient Egypt to protest workers' health and safety; negative perceptions of the working class in the oldest civilization; the social justice activism of the prophets of Western religions (all working-class folks!); and the creation of the selfie and transition from a culture of character to our present obsession with celebrities and individualism that began during the Renaissance. The conclusion highlights contemporary examples of social justice activism to improve working-class health and provide financial security considering the abuses of the working class throughout history as demonstrated by these four examples. The goal of this presentation is to show that the sufferings and successful struggles of the working class in the past offers us a way forward and reveals that engaged and united workers can sometimes achieve their goals.

*Bio: A former factory worker, soldier, traveler, and archaeologist, **Kenneth Atkinson** is a Professor of History specializing in ancient Middle East history. He is the author of "Academic Work as Factory Work: A Former Blue-Collar Worker's Observations on Class and Caste in the Academy." *Journal of Working-Class Studies* 7 (2022): 95-112.*

**Liz Giuffre, “Is Bluey an Underdog? Children’s Television and Class.”**

Australian hit animated series *Bluey* has attracted worldwide attention. Rich in detail and apparently 'relatable' characters and storylines, this paper considers *Bluey* and similar forms of children's television in relation to class. In particular - are clear class positions shown here and normalised, and what are the consequences of that? How literally are class representations to be taken by child audiences and should creators be mindful of this? Additionally, how are intergenerational audiences (carers, parents, adult viewers) shown in relation to class and has this contributed to the show's success?

*Bio: Liz Giuffre is Associate Professor in Media at the University of Technology Sydney and co-founder of the Journal of Working-Class Studies. She is a specialist in Australian popular media and culture.*

**Stacey Roberts, “Gets you right in the kidneys don’t it’: women’s bodies at work in Dorothy Hewett’s *Bobbin Up* (1959).”**

This paper examines the depictions of working women’s bodies in Dorothy Hewett’s 1959 novel *Bobbin Up*. The ensemble of working-class women characters range from teenagers to retirement age, and all are employed at the Jumbuck Spinning Mills, an inner-city Sydney factory in the early 1950s. Each of the women struggle with the relentless heavy labour required of them in the physically demanding mill, and the toll it takes on their bodies. Hewett also describes the corporeal impact of poor sanitation, long commutes, impoverished living, pregnancy, childbirth, parenting, addiction, and stress. *Bobbin Up* is a rare repository of working-class women’s everyday experience, and its rich and detailed description of their working bodies is one of the only instances that exist in Australian fiction. It therefore is an important record of working-class women’s experience in twentieth century Australia, a vastly understudied demographic. This discussion forms part of a wider project of examining working-class women’s representation in twentieth-century Australian women’s fiction. This paper addresses the conference’s theme “class and social justice” by bringing to light the very real consequences of class-based oppression on women’s bodies. By examining and sharing the written descriptions based on lived experience of poor health and injuries working-class women experienced in mid-twentieth century Australia, it provides an understanding that contributes to strengthening the foundation of social justice movements.

**Terry Easton, "Threads of Justice: textile mill novels of the 20th century U.S. South."**

This presentation examines intersections of class, gender, and race among several novels set in the twentieth century U.S. South, including Wiley Cash's *The Last Ballad* (2017) and Mary Heaton Vorse's *Strike!* (1930). These fictional accounts of actual strikes and real people who participated in them offer us a way to view history through a literary lens and fiction through a historical lens. I will discuss the authors' literary strategies that voice the lived experience of workers and their families in fictional landscapes replete with aural and visual detail that illustrates unyielding desire for better conditions on the job and off. This presentation addresses several conference themes, including Class and its Intersections, Union Activism, and Class Cultures and Identities. Further, I believe this presentation fits within University of Technology Sydney's Social Impact Framework of positively influencing and impacting the public, individual, and systemic forces that shape justice.

**Tim Briedis, "Red Hunter: Communist and working class histories in the Hunter, 1920s-1940s."**

The town of Maitland in the Hunter Valley in NSW, with a population of 90000, is the fastest growing area in the Hunter, and one of the fastest in the state. But does the Maitland area have a radical history of conflict and struggle? Looking extensively through the communist and union press of the early 20th century shows that the area does indeed have a hidden history of radicalism. Miners in the nearby pits, with their long tradition of struggle, were an important part of this, but activity went beyond them, with a free speech fight leading to the jailing of militants, a boycott of a rugby match because of the participation of a non unionist, a successful relief workers strike, unemployed organising, mass anti fascist organising and a strike in the bakeries. My paper explores this array of activity. It's easy to think of the places in Australia that aren't major metropolitan centres as being sleepy and apolitical but the story of Maitland shows that political conflict and class struggle could rear its head in these places too. I argue that a thorough radical history of the continent should be inclusive of not just the capital cities but the towns and hamlets too. The paper speaks to the conference theme through a detailed exploration of working class organising in a particular place - the area of Maitland in New South Wales, Australia. It examines the efforts of union and communist militants to win justice for working class people against the many inequities of capitalism. Importantly, it is the first effort at a radical history of Maitland - now one of the fastest growing areas in the state.

## Wednesday Program Details

*Abstracts for presentations on Wednesday (in alphabetical order by first name of first author)*

### **Aggela Papadopoulou, "Drivers of Trade Union Membership in Greece, 1970-2019."**

This paper examines the drivers of trade union density in Greece for the period 1970-2019. To do so, we compile an extended dataset using data from Visser (2019), the OECD, the Labour Rights Index (LRI), and other archival sources. During the postwar reconstruction period, unionization grew substantially in most Western industrialized economies. Meanwhile, in Greece organised labour had been under attack in the context of the 1946-49 civil war and the 1967-74 military dictatorship. After the restoration of democracy and the legalization of unions, a significant yet short-lived expansion of union membership took place. Despite the incumbency of a socialist party between 1981 and 1989, economic policy rapidly converged to the emerging neoliberal agenda. This included three main pillars: labour market deregulation, integration into world trade, and de-industrialisation. These pressures on labour led to a steep decline in union density, from almost 40 per cent in 1983 to below 20 per cent in the early 2020s. Building on the historical analysis of the first part of the paper, we provide supporting regression results. More specifically, we show that the deregulation of wage-setting and the decentralisation of collective bargaining has severely undermined unionisation in Greece. Moreover, we find that trade globalisation and the de-industrialisation of the Greek economy have also contributed to the decline in union density since 1970.

*Bio: **Aggela Papadopoulou** is a Visiting Lecturer and Research Fellow at City St George's, University of London. Her research focuses on industrial relations, public finances, and inequalities.*

**Andrea McDougall, “Neoliberalism and Social Housing: comparing approaches to social housing in Manitoba and British Columbia, Canada.”**

As neoliberalism has taken hold in Canada over the last several decades social housing systems have been on the decline, significantly impacting the ability of working-class Canadians to access housing they can afford. The implementation and outcomes of neoliberalism in relation to social housing vary across jurisdictions, however, and this variability can be observed in the different approaches to social housing that have been adopted by Canadian provinces since the federal government devolved its responsibility in 1993. Using comparative methods, and drawing on sociological and political economic theoretical approaches, this study examines how the implementation of neoliberalism has, to more or less degree, eroded social housing in Manitoba and British Columbia, not only by reducing state involvement in its provision, but also by reducing state and civil society’s capacity to provide it. Findings discussed will include how social housing policies have been impacted by neoliberalism through devolution and decentralization of policy responsibility and delivery, reduced social spending, marketization, privatization, restructured relations between housing providers and the state, tenant targeting requirements, non-democratic policy-making practices, and the shift from supply- to demand-side policies. This project addresses the conference theme by recognizing social housing as an important redistributive form of social justice for working-class households, many of whom struggle to gain access to market-based forms of housing that dominate neoliberal-oriented approaches to housing policy .

*Bio: **Andrea** (she/her) is a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Her research interests focus on processes of social inequality, with specific concentration on social housing and related policy. Andrea is in the final stages of a Master of Arts degree in Sociology, with expected completion in February 2026.*

**Cherie Madigan, “Increasing Access: creating a working class lit course with open educational resources.”**

I created a syllabus for Working-Class Literature and spent several months getting it through the Illinois Articulation Initiative which marks the course for automatic transfer credit at a network of higher ed institutions. This can be make-or-break for a Humanities course—if transfer credit isn’t guaranteed, students won’t enroll. I WANT students (especially struggling students) to take this course. Students will often choose courses (or sections of courses) based on the added expense of the required textbooks—another make-or-break. The first time the course was offered, when I posted a handful of required texts, it did not make

numbers. When it was offered again, I listed the course as “no textbook required,” and relied on open resource materials found online, through library resources, and small bits of larger works still within copyright law. I drew enough enrollment for the course to go, and the students currently enrolled are engaged, enthused, and I think in the case of some, seeing themselves in literature in a way they haven’t before. To make the reading material more manageable (for myself and anyone else teaching the course), I signed up for an OER (Open Educational Resource) course through my institution; I am currently working on small pieces of what will be a larger online textbook project licensed and shareable through Creative Commons. My presentation at the conference will address creating a Working-Class Literature course, and an accompanying OER, so my (majority) working-class students have equitable access as inexpensively as possible.

**Christine Gallagher, “Socioeconomic prioritisation in Australian Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Policies.”**

I propose to contribute to the conference theme on class and social justice by presenting my PhD research on the topic of socioeconomic exclusion in Australian workplace diversity and inclusion policies. This would fit with the conference stream on work and class and has elements relevant to class and education. Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategies often propose to prioritise historically and contemporarily marginalised people or underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. We know that social class matters when it comes to educational access, professional attainment, and workplace inclusion (Novosad, Asher, Farquharson, & Iljazi, 2024; Rhodes, C., Pullen, A., McEwen, C., 2023; Perry, Rowe & Lubienski, 2022; Brown, D’Almada-Remedios, Dunbar, O’Leary, Evans, and Rubin, 2020). On that basis, in principle, socioeconomic characteristics should be targeted in D&I strategies as a matter of equity. In 2024, I conducted a content analysis of 96 Australian workplace D&I publications—selected for being most likely to feature socioeconomic inclusion—and found only two employers prioritising socioeconomic characteristics. In 2025, I plan to build on those findings with further empirical research. Part of the research design is looking at the roles of the State, the media, D&I civil society actors, and the higher education industry in terms of the problem and possible solutions. This is normative-descriptive research. By the conference in December 2025, I expect to have new findings to present.

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**Elaine J Laberge, "Pushing Privileged Pillars in Canadian Universities: a widening access and participation model for poverty-class people." - Panel**

Canada, as a colonized nation within the Commonwealth, rarely addresses social class beyond its focus on the middle class. Consequently, publicly funded Canadian universities have largely neglected initiatives to broaden access and participation for class-marginalized groups, including first-generation, working-class, and poverty-class students. However, this long-standing neglect may shift, informed by an eight-year research project conducted by the facilitator. This research culminated in the development of a social innovation model aimed at expanding access and participation for students from poverty. Rooted in a non-deficit and decolonial framework, the model challenges both individual and systemic barriers, offering a transformative approach to class and social justice. It critically interrogates the entrenched colonial and capitalist-neoliberal structures of Canada's public higher education system while advocating for systemic change. Employing an intersectional lens, the model centers social class while addressing interconnected issues such as the gendered nature of poverty discrimination in Canadian higher education. In this session, the facilitator will explore the model in depth, demonstrating its potential to disrupt institutional privilege and reimagine universities as spaces of equity and inclusion. Participants will collaborate on strategies to challenge and transform privileged structures in their own institutions, gaining actionable insights into advancing class-based social justice within their organizations.

**Elizabeth Humphrys, Jesse Adams-Stein and Bettina Frankham, "Class & Clothes: hi-vis workwear on the streets of Sydney"**

High-visibility clothing — known as 'hi-vis' for short, or 'safety orange' in the US — is a ubiquitous aspect of cultural and industrial life in many countries, including Australia. Our interdisciplinary project examines the experiences of the workers who wear this clothing, and the historical and social context of hi-vis garments in Australia. In this paper we examine how hi-vis clothing intersects with class, asking what and how hi-vis communicates in this regard. The project draws on the team's expertise in history, design, labour relations, and creative screen production.

**Faye Cura, "Work on the Books: women workers and feminist publishing in the Philippines."**

Gantala Press is an independent feminist small press based in Metro Manila, the Philippines. Since its formation in 2015, it has worked with peasant women, indigenous women, victim-survivors of the drug war, women political prisoners, migrant women, and women workers in producing literary anthologies, comics, cookbooks, and zines that contribute to various information and fundraising campaigns for human rights and social justice. The presentation will lay out a recent history of women workers and a general labor landscape in the Philippines using publications by Gantala Press. These publications include a cookbook produced to raise bail money for arrested union workers on strike, a zine documenting the lives of agricultural workers in Mindanao, a literary anthology and a photobook featuring migrant women workers, a collection of scholarly essays on women and labor, a Filipino translation of a Russian Bolshevik novel, and poems and prose on work, written by women workers themselves. The presentation will also tackle the potential and possibilities of feminist publishing in building solidarity with workers in the country and abroad as the Filipino people continue to struggle for national industrialization, genuine land reform, and national sovereignty.

*Bio: Faye Cura is a poet, editor, translator, and the publisher of [Gantala Press](#), a feminist small press in the Philippines. She is also a peasant women advocate and helps in people's campaigns for food security, peasant women rights and welfare, and national sovereignty.*

**Gay Breyley, "Class and Social Justice in Iranian Hip Hop."**

In most music industries, working-class women have long worked in conditions that are inequitable, from limited opportunities and misplaced assumptions in childhood to exploitative practices and lack of recognition throughout professional careers, and structural

ageism that disadvantages women. To counter the effects of historic and ongoing inequalities, some industry, community and government bodies have developed and implemented a range of policies, with varying levels of success. Meanwhile, other bodies, such as the government of Iran, have implemented policies that explicitly restrict women's pathways in national music industries. In this paper, I consider how artists who work across such seemingly divergent contexts develop strategies to navigate their shifting possibilities. With a focus on Iranian-born women who have made music and performed both in and outside Iran, I examine both intended and unintended effects of policies around class and gender, how policies can shape realities, and collaborative relationships emerging from working-class artists' experiences in these contexts.

**Giorgos Gouzoulis, "Financialization and the Black-White Pay Gap in the United States."**

This paper examines the relationship between the financialization of households, racial discrimination in wage negotiations, and the racial pay gap in the United States between 1989 and 2024, using quarterly data from the SCF and the CPS. Regression analysis shows that, independently, the rising household debt burden faced by Black and African American households and the highest share of white business owners have been key negative drivers of the Black-White pay gap. This finding complements existing work which shows that personal debt makes indebted workers less demanding in wage negotiations to avoid losing their job and defaulting on their debt. However, interacting the two coefficients shows that the larger the share of white business owners in the economy, the weaker the negative effect of debt held by Black workers on the black-white wage gap is. We argue that despite white businesses discriminating against black workers in wage negotiations, a white business might be a safer option for an indebted black worker in terms of financing their debt liabilities since it is less likely to fail and, thus, offers better job stability. Overall, our results contrast mainstream financial literacy/education arguments that access to finance by underrepresented social groups can lead to more egalitarian outcomes and show that the fear of defaulting on their debt makes Black and African American workers rather more vulnerable in the labour market.

**Helen Lowe, "The Role of Friendships in Social Class Mobility: are schools doing enough to foster cross-class friendships for disadvantaged students?"**

Chetty (2022) highlights the significant impact of cross-class relationships on the success of children from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds. Disadvantaged children who interact with higher-income peers tend to achieve higher adult earnings than those who primarily associate with other disadvantaged children. However, these children may lack the inherited social connections necessary for economic mobility, which can be compensated for by relationships formed in school (Putnam, 2000). My PhD research explored social class mobility by examining the personal narratives of individuals who grew up in Limerick's most disadvantaged housing estates. Through in-depth interviews, I investigated their experiences of escaping poverty and the factors that contributed to their upward mobility. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, I analysed the interplay of push and pull factors within social structures that facilitated this mobility. The primary goal was to identify common factors that enabled individuals to break the cycle of poverty. The most significant finding was the positive impact of non-hereditary social capital, particularly friendships, on educational decisions. The education system played a crucial role in expanding participants' social networks through interactions with diverse peers. This underscores the importance of early exposure to cross-class connections in facilitating upward mobility. School emerged as the most effective setting for these transformative cross-class encounters. Therefore, this study highlights the need for education policies and legislation to prioritise the development of all forms of capital, particularly social capital, which research consistently identifies as crucial for economic advancement. Furthermore, the study provides unique insights into the lived experiences of individuals from marginalised communities and the transformative impact of social capital on their lives.

**Joseph Varga, "Popular Music and Working Class Alienation: the roots of right-wing populism."**

A song is never just a song. Music both reflects and helps shape our cultural understandings of complex processes. In this presentation, I examine how the music of a middle-class musician serves as a base for understanding working class anger and alienation. Billy Joel's trilogy of working class angst, his songs "Allentown", "Goodnight, Saigon" and "Downeaster Alexa" reflect the decline of a particular working class culture, and can aid in our understanding of our current political realignment, where working class voters are shifting allegiance from the New Deal Coalition, to forms of right-wing populism.

In this paper, I present the music of Billy Joel, in comparison to other cultural expressions of working class alienation, to examine how his music, while written from a middle class perspective, accurately reflects the anger and sense of loss that has driven many workers away from their connections to the Democratic Party. In this presentation, we listen to the music of various artists to gain understanding of our current crisis and its roots in the decline of a racially and regionally marked conception of the working class.

**Kelly King, “Is Service-Learning Enough?: bordering advocacy for immigrant youth in Japan.”**

I will discuss how I came to develop and teach a service-learning course, which focuses on supporting immigrant youth in local schools. It has been argued that class is overlooked and under theorized in sociological studies in Japan (Hashimoto, 2000), and despite the apparent increase in economic disparity in Japan since the 1980s (Hashimoto, 2021,) the mainstream view of Japan continues to be that of a nation of middle-class households. However, working at a national university in an area with a declining and aging population, class differences, though not discussed as such, become obvious among students, such as those who change their plans for study abroad due to financial reasons, or those who decide to study at this public institution in order to live with their families and thus, afford tuition. Over time, it has also become clear that a number of students are first-generation university students and in other ways (e.g. parent’s occupation, income etc.) may be defined as having working-class backgrounds. Moreover, the community which is the subject of the service-learning course is the foreign resident/immigrant population living and working in the local area, who may also be considered as inhabiting working-class spaces.

The service-learning course I teach is unique in Japan, in that it was designed to serve immigrant children attending Japanese public schools, who are an underserved community. Currently few public Japanese schools have faculty or staff who can offer Japanese language instruction or support, or who can create spaces for immigrant children to interact freely with a teacher, tutor or mentor. There are few Japanese teachers working in public schools who are able to assess the linguistic or academic needs of immigrant children, and this is especially true in schools in non-metropolitan areas where there may be a small number of students requiring such assessment or support. There is also the issue of funding; without financial backing from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), local governments do not have the necessary funds to hire and/or train or re-train teachers and counselors to work with immigrant children. Thus, there is a real need to engage volunteers to work in schools. Some questions my talk will address include: will providing support for a few children in public schools each year help change the system in any real way? Does creating opportunities for volunteering via service-learning allow the government to ignore the need for supporting immigrant children? Does it undermine Japanese-as-a-second language teachers who despite their training and professional experience have few opportunities for full-time employment? Can a service-learning curriculum help create a consciousness via which university students will advocate for immigrant children?

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**Lisa McKenzie, “Working Class Cultural Exchanges in East London and the Northern Mining Communities: class consciousness isn’t dead yet.”**

The presentation focuses on a cultural exchange project in the UK between two disadvantaged communities and a group of working class young people. In the UK there has been much political rhetoric about the geographical differences and inequalities. It has suited both left and right narratives to play on these divisions - The City Versus the small town this divisive rhetoric is not limited to the UK, the US and Europe have also had politicians, academics and media organisations which have also pushed these geographical inequalities and divisions. This paper follows a small project of two groups of young people coming from different geographies and ethnicities into each other's communities. A group of inner-city multi-cultural young people from East London visited the de-industrialized mining communities in Nottingham-shire. The presentation focuses on the interaction of these young people and their environments which was stark in differences however their classed experiences they found commonality in how they were excluded.

**Mara Fridell, “The Lessons of the Past Were Learned with Workers’ Blood: correcting the crises of elite overproduction and antienlightenment patronage.”**

As the world explodes in technologically-overpowered crises, genocide, war, what lessons can we learn from past egaliberte (freedom founded in equality) interventions? How could the overhanging elite mass be divided, dismantled, and sufficiently neutralized? How could a heavily surveilled, isolated and immobilized working class, ingrained with policing and commercial dispositions, reclaim the driver’s seat for global emancipation? In the constraining political-economy of underdeveloped democracy, militant common law-enabled expropriative capitalism, and elite overproduction, “participating in elites’ splendour” (de Maistre) has served as the inegalitarian substitute for life, defined by developmental biologists as organismal agency and innovation for thriving.

By design, the Cold War restoration of Antienlightenment ideology and cold, hard financialized, militarized inequality have rebuilt extremist exceptionalism and patronage patriarchies. An extension of democratic Enlightenment social science, this paper identifies the legal and political-economic basis for the reemergence of extreme inequality, elite overproduction, and patronage, focusing on the elite restoration of the fighting Antienlightenment and patriarchal patronage networks across finance, policing, law, and politics. This paper clarifies the invariant, inegalitarian core of innovative Antienlightenment ideology supplying revanchist fervor to inequality interests, and explains how that directs monopolized agency to defy the conditions of Terrestrial life, pitching humanity toward global ecological devastation, carceralism, the social fascia of defiling patriarchy (revealed eg. in the 2024 Pelicot case), genocide, and mounting world war. The paper concludes with lessons from the global history of “motley crew” (Linebaugh & Rediker, 2000) working-class interventions restoring—if never securing—the conditions of life on Earth.

**Mark Gawne, “The ‘Muck of Ages’ and the ‘Scum of Humanity’: crime, class, moralities of contestation.”**

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote that communism requires the alteration of ourselves, an alteration that must happen through practical experiences, and that ultimately it is only through revolution that we will “succeed in ridding [ourselves] of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew” (1976). Identifying the terrains and constructing the forms of organisation that might facilitate this practical alteration and lead to revolution remain open and important questions. And yet, despite the necessity of the mass scale of this transformation of social organisation, cooperation, and subjectivity, certain layers of society tend to be neglected in the analysis of transformative potential. As Paul Mattick (1935) has illustrated, this so-called “scum of humanity” provide important examples of how such transformation might take place. This paper addresses issues related to unemployment, class composition and class formation in relation to the everyday practices of refusal and communistic cooperation. Drawing from the author’s own experience in a criminalised and incarcerated family and neighbourhood, this paper will analyse the forms and modalities of class power and resistance that characterise everyday conditions of living while excluded from the wage. The paper argues that the everyday struggles carried out by the ‘surplus populations’ constitute an important terrain of class organisation that challenges the easy dismissal of those considered lumpenproletarian as reactionary and inherently backward.

**Mark Hudson (co-authors: Anupam Das, Ian Hudson and Niall Harney, “Determinants of Unionization in Canada: Macro structure, policy mix, and the decision to organize.”**

Union density across Canadian provinces varies considerably. In previous work, the authors have investigated the impacts of unionization on measures of public welfare. Here, we develop a model that explores the drivers of this variation. Much of the previous work on this question from within economics takes a rational-choice approach to the question, assuming that context specific conditions alter the marginal cost-benefit calculations of workers and unions as they contemplate organizing a workplace. This paper adopts a mixed-methods approach, relying on interviews with union organizers and union leadership to both complement and modify our quantitative modeling. The model explores the significance of sectoral structure, macroeconomic indicators, provincial government policy, and characteristics of workplaces, workers, and union dispositions toward organizing.

*Bios: Anupam Das is a Professor of Economics at Mount Royal University, specializing in development and heterodox economics. He has published in journals such as Capital & Class, Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review, and the Review of Political Economy, focusing on gender inequality, macroeconomic policy, and income distribution in both global and Canadian contexts.*

**Matthew Sparkes, “Stigmatism and resistance: the plight of mortgage prisoners in the post-GFC era.”**

The expansion of debt-leveraged homeownership in financialised economies like the US, the UK, and Australia has intensified class stratification. Asset-based stratification theorists argue that housing, bolstered by favourable governmental policies, plays a key role in defining individuals' class positions (Adkins et al., 2019). However, this view overlooks the varied policy responses following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), which have differentially impacted homeowners. While investors benefited from policies such as quantitative easing (Forrest and Hirayama, 2018), marginal homeowners faced challenges due to neoliberal policies like labour market flexibility and austerity measures (Aalbers, 2017), accompanied by a stigmatising narrative of personal failure (Sparkes, 2020). A significant, yet overlooked, group affected by the GFC are ‘mortgage prisoners’. These are borrowers who obtained mortgages from now-obsolete lenders, later sold to inactive investment firms by the UK government. Due to high loan-to-value ratios and low credit scores, they are unable to remortgage. Recent research highlights a stigmatising discourse labelling mortgage prisoners as risky borrowers, influencing policies that entrench their disadvantaged position in credit and housing markets (Sparkes, forthcoming). Despite political and media attention, academic research on the impact of stigma on mortgage prisoners is limited. This study addresses this gap through a qualitative case study involving 28 semi-structured

interviews with UK-based mortgage prisoners. Building on Tyler's (2020) research on stigma as a form of neoliberal power, findings reveal that mortgage prisoners are aware of the stigmatising discourse. While some internalise it as a moral failure, others have mobilised as a data public, resisting their stigmatised classification and demanding justice.

**Michele Fazio, "Archives as Advocacy: creating Indigenous data sovereignty through community-based learning."**

My presentation will outline the parameters for creating and maintaining a community-driven oral history and archival project that privileges Indigenous data sovereignty. Building upon the review of unprocessed archival materials about the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, previously collected by scholars and located in my institution's library, and the life histories and photographs collected by the Federal Writers' Project and Farm Security Administration New Deal programs both housed at the Library of Congress, undergraduate students are collecting and analyzing data to create a new archival repository for tribal purposes.

This project—experiential and community-based—has far-reaching implications for high-impact learning and community outreach as new interview transcriptions and the creation of digital story maps add to the historical record of how rural Indigenous communities in the Southeast were documented during the 1930s and 40s, highlighting, in particular, how race, region, and labor intersect and complicate the preservation of lived experiences among Indigenous communities. Moreover, under-represented students, many of whom are first-generation, working-class, and Indigenous, are leading efforts to explore the ethical issues at stake with managing culturally-sensitive materials and collecting life histories, determining alongside tribal administrators the access and use of these materials for future use. In this way, archives become a powerful tool for teaching social justice in the service-learning classroom at UNC Pembroke, a Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI) originally established for American Indians by American Indians. I will also share strategies/lessons learned as well as examples of student work in progress to illustrate the learning outcomes of this public humanities project.

*Bio: **Dr. Michele Fazio** is professor of English and director of the Pembroke Mellon REACH Program at UNC Pembroke. She co-edited the Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies and has served as past-president of the Working-Class Studies Association. She hosts, "Folk Matters: A Podcast about Music and Activism," created by the Teaching Woody Guthrie Collective of which she is a founding member.*

**Miranda Mosier-Puentes and Elaine Szeto, “Giving the world to each other’: photovoice perspectives on education from members of underrepresented communities.”**

In the United States, college students from historically underrepresented communities (i.e., low-income, first-generation, and/or Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) hold many intersectional working-class identities. While much is known about their experiences in college, little is known about historically underrepresented students who leave college without completing a bachelor’s degree. This visual presentation comes from a Photovoice project focused on the educational perspectives of members of underrepresented communities who did not complete bachelor’s degrees. Participants held a variety of intersectional, working-class identities: Latina, low-income, immigrant, disabled, housing insecure, elder, and (former) student parents (mothers), and highlighted the paradoxes of pursuing a college education as students from underrepresented communities. They spoke of education as “giving the world to each other,” rejecting education that centers standardized, “textbook” knowledge and dismisses the lived experiences of working-class people in favor of education as a process of “betterment” of self and community. We’ll also discuss implications for fellow educators invested in educational access for working-class communities.

**Nysha Chantel Givens, “Resisting Dominant Narratives: an ethnographic exploration of identity formation in Black communities.”**

This research explores the transformative role of traditional storytelling in empowering marginalised Black communities, including African Americans and their diasporic counterparts. Grounded in post-colonial theory and cultural studies, it investigates how storytelling preserves cultural identity, fosters community bonds, and challenges dominant narratives. Through ethnographic methods, including participant observation and in-depth interviews, the study aims to identify the ways in which traditional storytelling empowers individuals, sustains collective identity, and promotes social justice. It further examines whether these practices retain their relevance in contemporary society, particularly in the context of systemic inequities. This research positions storytelling as a form of cultural resistance and empowerment, highlighting its capacity to reclaim marginalised voices and affirm shared histories. It addresses key questions: How does traditional storytelling empower individuals and communities? What role does it play in fostering connections and solidarity? And how does it evolve within contemporary Black communities to sustain cultural relevance? By engaging directly with community members and storytellers, the study ensures cultural sensitivity and seeks

to amplify voices from within the community rather than imposing external interpretations. The proposal aligns with the conference theme of "Class and Social Justice" by exploring how storytelling acts as a tool for resisting systemic oppression and amplifying marginalised voices. It emphasises the role of cultural narratives in challenging class-based inequities and fostering empowerment among Black communities. By preserving heritage and creating platforms for self-expression, traditional storytelling not only sustains identity but also advances the broader fight for social justice.

**Paddy Gibson, "Trade Unions and the Fight Against Australian Apartheid in the 1950s and 60s."**

For much of the 20th Century, Aboriginal people lived under so-called "protection" acts that controlled their lives and enforced segregation across many areas of Australian life. This paper will discuss the crucial role by Aboriginal trade unionists, and the wider trade union movement, in fighting and ultimately defeating this apartheid regime through the 1950s and 1960s. Along with campaigns for equal rights, trade unions also helped to put Aboriginal land rights and self-determination on the national agenda. The paper will have a particular focus on New South Wales and the role of Ray Peckham, an Aboriginal delegate from the Builders Labourers' Federation.

**Rachael O'Connor, Nadine Caviglioli and Stacey Mottershaw, "Adopting a Class-Conscious Practice in Higher Education."**

University staff and students who identify as working-class or coming from working-class backgrounds are often marginalised in higher education. Consequently, classism must be included with the broader EDI policies, procedures and guidance to create a teaching and learning community that is authentic, equitable and genuinely committed to social justice work. In particular, elite research-intensive universities can typically have heightened levels of classism, including microaggressions, due to the lack of working-class student and staff representation. However, we acknowledge that this is no simple feat. This workshop draws on recommendations from our book 'Challenging the Myths of Working-Class Identities: A Class-Conscious Practice in Higher Education' (forthcoming summer 2025) to support fellow practitioners to explore their own class-conscious practice with students and colleagues. We will discuss a broad range of recommendations for practice including class recognition; welcome and year-round induction; pastoral support; trauma, mental health and wellbeing; communication; curriculum content; careers and student futures; finances; social and extra-curricular interactions; change and transformation; student voices and research practice. The workshop will draw on our own experiences as interdisciplinary academics of working-class heritage working within an elite

higher education institution, alongside contributions from a Northern UK-based working-class Student Advisory Board who we discussed and shaped the book content with. We hope that sharing practical recommendations generated by staff and student perspectives will encourage participants to reflect on their own practice and develop a more class-conscious approach to staff-student relationships.

**Rachel Franks, “The Death Penalty in New South Wales: how the justice system recruited the working class as a collaborator.”**

Executioners were a critical component of the justice system in New South Wales. There was, after the arrival of colonists on the continent now known as Australia in 1788, an enthusiastic deployment of the hangman’s rope. The small, but all-powerful, ruling class of the settlements sprawling out from Sydney were committed to enforcing Imperial ideas of law and order. Yet the Governor, and his coterie, were not so keen on doing the dirty work of noose fittings. Those in charge needed to find someone willing to exchange their own punishment to be a punisher: a brutal choice of kill or be killed. So, the first hangmen avoided their own death sentences, but found their ‘deal with the devil’ had extreme consequences as seen in how many executioners went slowly insane, turned to drink or just disappeared; with Robert Howard, hangman from 1876 until 1904, a notable exception. Not everyone backed the carousel of men who worked the gallows, and as support for the abolition of the death penalty grew, people from all walks of life advocated for change. This research explores the recruitment of hangmen from the ranks of the working class, and highlights that those hanged were more likely to be the marginalised and the poor. Moreover, this paper outlines how the task of judicial execution - despite sporadic attempts to professionalise the role of the hangman, and Robert Howard’s reputation as a ‘gentleman hangman’ - impacted upon the mental and physical health of these men which, in turn, reinforced class boundaries.

*Bio: Rachel Franks is the Coordinator, Scholarship at the State Library of NSW. She holds PhDs in Australian crime fiction (Central Queensland University) and in true crime texts (University of Sydney). She is the author of "An Uncommon Hangman" (2022).*

**Sarah Attfield, “Working-Class Participation in Popular Music.”**

People from working-class backgrounds are finding it increasingly difficult to participate in the creative arts. The lack of working-class people in the creative arts is being acknowledged in the UK, but how does this translate to the Australian and US experience, and is there a problem of working-class participation in popular music in these three regions? This paper will lead with a series of questions to be explored in more detail in a book on working-class participation in popular music, and will offer a critique of the systems that prevent working-class people from becoming musical artists.

*Bio: Sarah Attfield has a working-class background and is originally from London. She has been living in Australia for a long time and now works as a senior lecturer in creative writing in the School of Communication, Faculty of Design and Society at UTS. Sarah is the author of [Class on Page and Stage: The Australian Working Class in Contemporary Literature and Theatre](#), Peter Lang, 2025 and [Class on Screen: The Global Working Class in Contemporary Cinema](#), Palgrave, 2020. She is the co-editor of [Creative Writing Practice: Reflections on Form and Process](#), Palgrave, 2021. Sarah is also the co-editor of the [Journal of Working-Class Studies](#). She is also the current president of the UTS branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).*

### Shea Hennum, "Are Incarcerated People Working Class?"

The prevailing analysis of prisons focuses on the 13th amendment to the U.S. constitution, which preserves involuntary servitude as a form of criminal punishment. Consequently, prisons represent the reformation of slavery, conceived largely as a system of labor exploitation for the generation of profit. This neo-slavery thesis explains the mass character that incarceration has taken on by focusing on privately-owned prisons and corporations exploiting prisoners as workers. However, it cannot account for the 92% of prisoners held in public prisons. Nor can it account for the fact that most prisoners who work for a wage do so for the state, or the facts that many prisoners do not work and of those who do, most perform non-productive labor.

In an effort to account for these facts, this presentation revises the neo-slavery thesis by historicizing prison's relation to slavery. In doing so, it finds that the two are historically co-constitutive, and imprisonment has long-been a legal synonym for slavery to the state. Though, as I argue, this form of enslavement does not primarily function through the exploitation of labor. Rather, it serves to warehouse relative surplus populations and thereby regulate various markets in labor, housing, healthcare, finance, and commodity exchange. In this way, prisons perform a critical function in working-class formation, and prisoners constitute a non-working

underclass that conditions the working class's existence. By clarifying this relationship between prisoners and workers, we can better understand the relationship between social (in)justice and working-class life.

**Sonal Singh and others from the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion (UTS), "Widening Participation Programs."**

**Abstract TBC**

**Tami Gadir, "Singing Solidarity and Struggle: Labour Choirs, the Union Movement, and the Politics of Class."**

The labour (workers) choir is a living, international tradition that the working class has used for centuries to articulate its shared experiences through song. Such singing groups, which, as archival research would suggest, began as informal gatherings of workers, became more formalised as they mirrored of the expanding labour movements they were part of, including union or union bodies. The labour choirs with whom I have conducted ethnographic research are non-auditioning and democratic. They forego the barrier of the musical skills acquired from formal training and their core goal is to fight exploitation from a proletarian class position, which means supporting workers as they take industrial action in all its forms. At the same time, choirs attached to unions are far from purely economic in their focus. Rather, they reflect both the material and broader, political interests of the international union movement, which has historically concerned itself with progressive movements of social justice such as national liberation struggles (Chile, South Africa, Palestine), campaigns against wars (Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan), anti-racism (Black Lives Matter), First Nations justice (the Yes campaign for the Indigenous Voice to Parliament in Australia), and refugee rights—to name only a few. In this presentation, I will address how the cultural and political ensemble formation of labour choirs have articulated and enacted a form of politics from the 1800s to the present that prioritises the self-emancipation both of the working class and of all oppressed peoples.

## Thursday Program Details

*Abstracts for presentations on Thursday (in alphabetical order by first name of first author)*

**Alicja Budzyńska, "Coming of Age of Girls from Small Towns: the representation of class mobility in the contemporary Polish novels."**

The presentation will focus on literary depictions of social mobility in contemporary Polish fiction. These depictions will be contrasted with the perspective found in autobiographical works documenting the author's own upward mobility (inspirations for such texts, also in Poland, include works by French authors such as Didier Eribon, Annie Ernaux, and Édouard Louis). Using contemporary Polish novels as examples, I will demonstrate how fictional literature, unlike autobiographical works, portrays social mobility, which in the novels becomes an impossible goal for the protagonists. I will analyze the common features of the depicted worlds that influence the way social mobility is presented: the age and gender of the protagonists, the role of education, and the importance of literature and literary language.

The presentation will not only be a literary academic lecture but will also aim to highlight the significance of literature in shaping the social discourse on class mobility. Literary visions are, on one hand, expressions of social moods—records of class inequalities that, although marginalized in the media discourse, become one of the most important social themes in literature. On the other hand, literature, especially popular fiction, influences how we perceive class issues and how we think and talk about them. Autobiographies seem to suggest that class mobility in contemporary societies, even if described as a miracle, is possible. Fictional literature, on the other hand, shows why our class background constantly determines us. Although the perspective in literary fictions is not optimistic, it may be the first step toward any change toward social justice. Contemporary Polish novels clearly point to the factors that influence class exclusion. These observations may not be groundbreaking for social sciences, but through literature, they acquire a tangible quality, even if the characters are fictional, making their stories concrete.

**Clare Callahan, "Song of the Poor: negotiating worth in Anzia Yeziarska's *Salome of the Tenements*."**

In Anzia Yeziarska's *Salome of the Tenements* (1922), the protagonist Sonya Vrunsky, a poor immigrant living in the New York City tenements, demands "only the democracy of beauty," expressing indifference toward "the fight for government democracy." Embracing a program of non-opposition, Sonya makes urgent the pursuit of luxury, which allows her to negotiate self-worth amidst want. Her emphasis on self-worth enables her critique of philanthropic institutions' differentiating between the worthy and unworthy poor, according to which the worthy poor negotiate only survival and forgo gratification. This paper argues that Yeziarska turns away from a politics of recognition, which she exposes as relying on and reinforcing the construction of the worthy poor; instead,

she advocates for a class-consciousness that obscures the boundary between necessity and luxury. Yeziarska thus calls attention to what Alyosha Goldstein describes as the threat of poverty without misery, invalidating the idea that “any enjoyment poor people may have is . . . an act of theft.” Toward the end of *Salome*, Sonya, who has found her calling as a clothing designer, imagines a costume that is both plain and luxurious, an aesthetic that undermines visible distinctions between poor and affluent consumers. Sonya’s refusing to discriminate between necessity and luxury reveals that the classification of the poor as worthy or unworthy hardens class distinctions rather than facilitates economic mobility or cross-class relation. Yeziarska, then, sees greater possibility in non-oppositional and unorganized spaces and practices for promoting egalitarianism and redefining worth. Keywords: poverty, value, pleasure, immigrant, recognition, democracy.

**Jackie Gabriel, “After Coal Was King: Colorado’s Just Transition bill and coal ‘transition communities’.”**

Jobs in the U.S. coal industry are declining as states address the climate crisis. Colorado is the first state in the nation to pass a Just Transition Bill. In 2019, it passed HB 19-1314: A Just Transition from Coal-Based Electrical Energy Economy. This Bill created the nation’s first Office of Just Transitions (OJT) and Just Transition Advisory Committee (JTAC) tasked with developing a statewide Just Transition Plan, which was released in late 2020. Designed to assist communities and workers, it defines a “coal transition community” as a municipality, county, or region that has been or will be affected by the loss of fifty or more jobs in total from a coal mine, coal-fueled electrical power generating plant, or the manufacturing and transportation supply chains of either. Gunnison County is one such “coal transition community,” In fact, of the remaining eight operating mines in Colorado, West Elk Mine Mountain Coal Company in Gunnison County has the greatest number of employees (approximately 280) and output of any mine in the state. My research examines how the implementation of climate legislation, specifically Colorado’s Just Transition Bill, affects coal transition communities and coal mine workers. Through ethnographic research, I explore how coal transition communities and workers have dealt with mine and coal-fueled electrical power generating plants closures and prepare for a post-coal transition.

**Jackie Gabriel, “Worker Displacement and Resilience: a case study of a prolonged lockout among grain processing workers in America’s heartland.” - Plenary. Respondent: Mallorie Watts**

Presenter: Jackie will deliver her paper, providing an in-depth analysis of the findings and exploring the implications for the future of labor relations in the United States. Excerpt from the abstract: Using a case study of the GPC/UFCW lockout in Muscatine, Iowa, this paper examines the ways in which employers use lockouts to shift from standard employment relationships to precarious ones. Using primary data from this lockout and secondary data from other labor disputes, this research suggests that lockouts represent a novel way in which employers are able to shift from unionized workforces to temporary and thus more precarious work arrangements.

Respondent: Mallorie will serve as the respondent.

Possible conversation can connect to the incoming Trump administration and what that means for workers and workplace movements.

**Jen Vernon, "Class & Social Justice Poetry."**

This will be a 10-minute performance of new poetry on the conference theme. The poems will talk back to current news and issues of social justice from a working-class point of view and aim to communicate with a diverse working-class audience. If appropriate, the performance could be staged in the gallery space at UTS and include an ekphrastic response to the working-class art exhibit. Recent working-class artistic collaboration and performance poetry by Jen Vernon, co-organizer with others of the International Working-Class Storyfest at the ["Green Room bar Storytelling Sunday, tributing Working-Class Women"](#) 2 hour video, March 24, 2024. Placerville, California.

See Vernon introduce the event and claim space for it at 12-15 mins. and do poetry at 50-57 mins.

**Kristin Kovacic and Jim Daniels, "Telling it True: personal essays on class cultures and identities."**

In Coles and Zandy's *American Working Class Literature*, Muriel Rukeyser is introduced as a writer of witness. Both journalist and poet, Ruykeyser made it her mission to look up close at sites where injustice was manifested. *The Book of the Dead*, her 1938 collection of poetic montages recording the Union Carbide tragedy in West Virginia, helped bring to national attention the mining

abuses that resulted in up to 2000 miners' deaths from silicosis. The poems in this collection employ a photographic perspective of the place and the people of Gauley's Junction. But Rukeyser also captures in her poetry the voices of the people to tell their story, taking the reader directly into their world. In my presentation, I analyze portions of the poem as a counterpoint to the popular early 20th century meme of the 'road trip' demonstrating how Rukeyser exposes the ugliness of worker abuse hidden beneath a touristic appreciation of the beauty of a place. Her perspective in *The Book of the Dead* draws upon and caricatures the language of the State Road Guides, published contemporarily to encourage American travel. Through Rukeyser's writing and the work of other social justice writers of the time, attention was brought to the horrors that workers endured and coalesced to bring about congressional hearings on the Union Carbide tragedy. This presentation contributes to the theme of the convention, Class and Social Justice, by demonstrating how working class writers and working class writing hold an essential place in American literature as witnesses for social justice. Having taught a course in American Working Class Literature recently at my university, I can attest to the impact that these writers had on my students in Kentucky.

*Bios: Kristin Kovacic has won the Pushcart Prize, Orison Books Best Spiritual Literature Prize, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship and other awards for her essays, published widely in magazines such as Slate, Belt, Full Grown People, Brain Child, and The Iowa Review, and collected in the book History of My Breath. She is the co-editor, with Lynne Barrett, of the anthology Birth: A Literary Companion and author of the poetry chapbook House of Women. She has taught writing at all levels, including in the MFA programs of Chatham University and Carlow University and for many years in the Literary Arts department of the Pittsburgh High School for the Performing Arts. She lives and works in a deconsecrated Catholic Church on the South Side of Pittsburgh.*

*Jim Daniels' Late Invocation for Magic: New and Selected Poems is forthcoming from Michigan State University Press. Other recent books include An Ignorance of Trees, nonfiction, and The Luck of the Fall, fiction. A native of Detroit, he lives in Pittsburgh and teaches in the Alma College low-residency MFA program.*

**Kristine Aquino, "More than labour: Leisure cultures and city-making among Overseas Filipino Workers."**

Scholarship on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) has extensively examined the exploitative structures of labour migration that facilitate their mobility/immobility across borders, the abusive working conditions these migrants endure, and the political mobilisations of Filipino migrant workers. Alongside this, scholars have also increasingly explored OFWs' lives beyond their labour.

This paper foregrounds urban leisure cultures as a critical dimension of OFW lives, focusing on how leisure facilitates community building and urban belonging in cities where these migrants live and work precariously. It shares the experience of male OFWs in Singapore, drawing on ethnographic research to examine how informal sporting practices foster social infrastructures of connection, care, and resourcefulness. In doing so, it underscores the significance of migrant urban leisure cultures as a field of inquiry that deepens understandings of the structures of precarity experienced by labour migrants while also expanding knowledge of the affective, spatial, and social worlds that these migrants create beyond the domain of work.

**Mark Gawne, “No Toxic Jobs: working-class environmentalism and proletarian health in the fight against capitalist toxicity at Port Kembla.”**

Persistent discourses that counterpose, or orient only to, jobs vs the environment fail to explain the complex processes through which class and social contestation in the face of the climate crisis are taking shape in deindustrialised regions like the Illawarra. Moreover, they mystify how struggles around work and ecology provide insight into novel forms of organisation in the movements for climate justice. This paper presents initial findings from research into campaigns in the Illawarra that have drawn shopfloor health and environmental justice concerns together on a common terrain of struggle. Looking to the 1980s, when rank and file members of the Federated Ironworkers Association in Port Kembla stopped work for four days against cancer emissions, this paper explores how health and ecological concerns can combine from a working-class perspective. The case studies are analysed through the frameworks of working-class environmentalism (Barca, 2012) and noxious deindustrialisation (Feltrin et al, 2022). Working-class environmentalism (WCE) helps to overcome the division between labour and environmental movements to illustrate how, for example, the health and safety struggles of industrial workers constitute a key terrain of ecological movement. Noxious deindustrialisation (ND) illustrates the persistence of emissions and health impacts of fossil industries despite employment decline in these industries. This paper uses the Port Kembla case study to interrogate and expand the literature on WCE and ND, and provides a historic context in which to theorise contemporary struggles in deindustrialised regions.

**Michael Zweig and others from the US, “What the #\*&! is happening in the US?”**

Abstract TBC

**Natalie Krikowa, "Subverting TV Tropes: working-class and queer representation in *Deadloch* (2023)."**

Amazon Prime's *Deadloch* (2023), from creators Kate McLenna and Kate McCartney, offers a unique lens through which to explore the intersections of queer identity and working-class culture within contemporary Australian television. Set in a small Tasmanian town, this darkly comedic murder mystery subverts traditional genre tropes by foregrounding queer characters and socio-economic realities often marginalised in mainstream media. Through its richly layered characters and incisive satire, *Deadloch* interrogates prevailing societal norms, challenging the cultural invisibility of working-class queer lives. This paper examines how *Deadloch* employs humour and genre disruption to spotlight the lived experiences of queer, working-class, and First Nations individuals. Central to the analysis is the partnership between lead characters Detective Dulcie Collins (Kate Box), a pragmatic local, and Detective Eddie Redcliffe (Madeleine Sami), an outspoken outsider, whose dynamic illuminates the intersections of class, gender, and sexuality. Through their interplay, the series critiques institutional power structures while celebrating community diversity and resilience. The paper situates *Deadloch* within the broader landscape of Australian screen culture, exploring how the show navigates the tensions between rural and urban, conservatism and progressivism, and visibility and erasure. By centering queer and working-class identities, *Deadloch* offers an inclusive and disruptive narrative that helps to redefine Australian screen storytelling. This paper argues that *Deadloch* is not merely a crime drama but a cultural artifact that fosters critical discourse on representation, intersectionality, and the transformative potential of storytelling in challenging societal inequities.

*Bio: Dr. Natalie Krikowa (she/they) is a media scholar and practice-led researcher at the University of Technology Sydney. Natalie's research focuses on the intersection of media, technology, cultural practices and social justice. Natalie's work examines how screen media and digital and social media platforms can be leveraged to amplify underrepresented voices and narratives.*

**Nathaniel Heggins Bryant, "Queer Prison Work in the Birdman's Looking Outward: a voice from the grave."**

In 2014, the Birdman of Alcatraz momentarily emerged back into American consciousness when his newest book, *Looking Outward: A Voice from the Grave*, was published after languishing for decades in his lawyer's personal papers. Its author, Robert Stroud (1890-1963), is one of the most notorious convicts in U.S. history; Stroud spent fifty-four years in prison (1909-1963), mostly in segregation or solitary confinement. He earned his misleading moniker because he wrote two books on avian pathology after twenty years of research while imprisoned in Leavenworth, Kansas; he never worked on birds after his transfer to Alcatraz. *Looking Outward* serves as a fascinating insider account of how the federal prison system arose out of different 19th century penological institutions and philosophies, and Stroud was uniquely positioned during his long incarceration to witness and document the halting, haphazard rise of the federal system and the many injustices that occurred during the rapid expansion of state power. In my presentation, I want to closely attend to two subjects within *Looking Outward*. The first is Stroud's attention to compulsory penal labor regimes. The second, which often intersects with the first, is the way he directly challenges homophobia and repressive mores about queerness. Stroud's open discussion of queerness inside and outside prisons—from the psychosexual dynamics of hobo culture to interracial homosexuality inside—is so great that it is probably the main reason why Stroud's book went unpublished and is also reason enough for us to consider Stroud as an early queer activist decades before Stonewall.

**Orion Ligget, "Passing Through: a collection of queer and female road narratives."**

This anthology is inspired and spurred on by my own experiences of homelessness and nomadism from the years of 2008-2016. During graduate school, I have studied canonical hobo literature while writing my memoir and discovered an alarming absence of stories from queer and female hobos. This group of workers, travelers, and activists has been historically silenced because it was dangerous to reveal themselves and they often received a violent kind of moral judgement that white cis-males on the road did not. This project works to fill in those critical gaps by presenting a collection of poems, short stories, songs, and photographs from queer and female travelers with lived experiences of homelessness. Along with resolving an erasure of these voices, this collection explores societal forces that propel folks into transient lifestyles, paying close attention to economic precarity, institutionalized inequality, and systematic discrimination. Additionally, it reveals the radical acts of ingenuity, resilience, and solidarity inherent in the narratives of contemporary queer and female hobos. Despite crushing realities of labor exploitation, social isolation, police violence, mental illness, substance abuse, and trauma this community has come together to build safe spaces for found family through the transformative powers of autonomy and creativity. This project fits within the conference theme of 'class and social justice' as one of its main goals is to expose the layers of oppression and invisibility imposed on those that exist at the intersections of class,

gender, and sexuality, while simultaneously disrupting the male-dominated and heteronormative literary traditions of hobo narratives.

**Owen Clayton, Michele Fazio, Scott Henkel, Iain McIntyre and David Roediger, “*The Popular Wobbly: Selected Writings of T-Bone Slim.*” - Panel**

*Selected Writings of T-Bone Slim*, edited by Owen Clayton and Iain McIntyre, which also features an introduction by David Roediger. The book is the first critical edition of the writings of T-Bone Slim, the prolific radical workers’ newspaper columnist and musician who rode the rails during the Great Depression. It includes more than 150 annotated selections of Slim’s work from 1919 to 1942 as well as commentary from his contemporaries and others. *The Popular Wobbly* is a significant contribution to literature about working-class writers, the radical labor movement, and the history and culture of nomadism and precarity. With this publication, Slim’s rediscovered writings can once again inspire artists and activists to march and agitate for a more just and equitable world. The book is published by the University of Minnesota Press. Advance praise for the book comes from Tom Morello, Noam Chomsky, Billy Bragg, and a range of prominent voices in Working-Class Studies. Consistent with book discussion panels at previous WCSA conferences, the panel will begin with comments from the book’s editors, Clayton and McIntyre, including information from the Editors’ Note and the introductory essay included in the volume. The panel will then include comments from Roediger, who wrote a foreword to the volume, and then responses to the book from Fazio and Henkel.

**Peggy D. Otto, “Muriel Rukeyser’s *The Book of the Dead*: a counterguide for the tourist.”**

In Coles and Zandy’s *American Working Class Literature*, Muriel Rukeyser is introduced as a writer of witness. Both journalist and poet, Rukeyser made it her mission to look up close at sites where injustice was manifested. *The Book of the Dead*, her 1938 collection of poetic montages recording the Union Carbide tragedy in West Virginia, helped bring to national attention the mining abuses that resulted in up to 2000 miners’ deaths from silicosis. The poems in this collection employ a photographic perspective of the place and the people of Gauley’s Junction. But Rukeyser also captures in her poetry the voices of the people to tell their story, taking the reader directly into their world. In my presentation, I analyze portions of the poem as a counterpoint to the popular early

20th century meme of the 'road trip' demonstrating how Rukeyser exposes the ugliness of worker abuse hidden beneath a touristic appreciation of the beauty of a place. Her perspective in *The Book of the Dead* draws upon and caricatures the language of the State Road Guides, published contemporarily to encourage American travel. Through Rukeyser's writing and the work of other social justice writers of the time, attention was brought to the horrors that workers endured and coalesced to bring about congressional hearings on the Union Carbide tragedy. This presentation contributes to the theme of the convention, Class and Social Justice, by demonstrating how working class writers and working class writing hold an essential place in American literature as witnesses for social justice. Having taught a course in American Working Class Literature recently at my university, I can attest to the impact that these writers had on my students in Kentucky.

*Bio:* Associate professor of English at Western Kentucky University, **Peggy Otto** teaches literacy, literature, and pedagogy courses. Her presentations and publications discuss shirt factory workers in the rural South, the Federal Writers Project travel guides, and home demonstration clubs. She recently developed and taught a course on American Working Class Literature.

## Friday Program Details

*Abstracts for presentations on Friday (in alphabetical order by first name of first author)*

### **Adj Marshall, "Rethinking Social Mobility: why we don't talk about it but need to!"**

Higher education has often been lauded as a vehicle for social mobility, yet rarely are there spaces for conversations about social class in higher education. Engaging critically with social mobility forces us to confront classist assumptions, cultural norms, and policies of higher education that reveal the broader political and economic systems that perpetuate inequality. As higher education institutions (HEI) have opened their doors to poor and working-class first-generation students (PWCFGS), they have been criticized for upholding classist norms that reproduce the social class hierarchies upon which they were founded. Inviting PWCFGS into higher education without confronting the complex implications of social mobility, implicitly asks students to assimilate into the upper-class norms of their institution and to ignore the broader class structures that hold these systems in place, which brings further harm to already marginalized students and their communities. HEI professionals must push back against the singular narrative of social mobility to name the ways social class oppression functions in higher education and encourage practices that build class solidarity. Recommendations are provided for programming and policies that embed poor and working-class values and foreground poor and working-class identities in higher education.

*Bio: Adj is a trainer, writer, and advocate for socioeconomic and environmental equity with over 20 years of experience in community engagement across academia and the nonprofit sector. They are the founder of First Gen Leadership (FGL), an empowerment non-profit focused on poor and working-class first-generation college students and graduates. Over the organization's 14-year history, FGL has worked with 4,500 first-gen Faculty staff and students. Previously, Adj led initiatives at Tufts, MIT, and Greentown Labs.*

Angelica Belloli, “Justice as Transaction: symbolic exchange and the moral economy of survival in Walter Greenwood’s *Love on the Dole* (1933).”

Abstract TBC

Barbara Jensen, Jack Metzgar and Sarah Attfield, “Working Class Voice, Working Class Lives: creative non-fiction on the lives of the working class.”

This panel teams up long-time working-class studies scholars and one Australian newcomer to working-class studies to reflect and speak about their experiences as working-class people, as working-class crossovers, in a variety of voices and forms. These narrative, creative non-fiction authors will read from their own writing.

The readers address class-related borders, romance, neighborhood class dynamics, and actual, often complicated, working-class lives; they represent international perspectives on working class culture. All the authors are from working class backgrounds that entered (or are entering) the professional class via education. The panelists share an ability to hear, value, and bridge the differing, often-contradictory voices and values their working- and (later) middle-class lives have engendered in them. They have each endeavored to balance on the border between working class lives and professional middle class work. This panel promotes the idea that working-class stories and life experiences are central to understanding working class studies. That personal knowledge is also useful academic knowledge (alongside other academic work), as has been the case in Women’s Studies, Latina/o and African American studies.

*Bios: Barbara Jensen, independent scholar, will read: “Mid-town Exchange.” This personal essay is about class dynamics in her neighborhood in Minneapolis (the neighborhood where George Floyd was killed by the Minneapolis police). When the mayor and other city officials held a “soft opening” for a new global market that that was installed in a long- abandoned Sears Robuck building, Jensen happened upon it and noticed no one from the neighborhood was allowed within the area set aside for the event where there were free drinks and food and lots of city officials congratulating themselves on the opening, in business wear. Jensen ponders the meaning of those inside and those outside the roped off event, eventually uses her cultural capital to get within the*

*roped off event, and then looks out at the raggedy neighborhood members who were not welcome. She explores cognitive dissonance created by straddling two worlds, her working class neighbors versus the city officials who didn't even notice the actual people that live there, hungrily and thirstily gazing with envy at the well-suited crowd within the ropes. Barbara helped establish the WCSA and co-chaired its first conference, later serving as its president. She authored *Reading Classes: On Culture and Classism in America*.*

**Jack Metzgar** will read “SEIU Flat Janitors” about his contrasting times as a building janitor and later a labor studies expert and about a union that went bad but still did lots of good. Jack is one of the co-founders of WCSA and a past president. He was editor of *Labor Research Review* in the 1980s and ‘90s and is author of *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered and Bridging the Divide: Working-Class Culture in a Middle-Class Society*.

**Sarah Attfield** has a working-class background and is originally from London. She has been living in Australia for a long time and now works as a senior lecturer in creative writing in the School of Communication, Faculty of Design and Society at UTS. Sarah is the author of [Class on Page and Stage: The Australian Working Class in Contemporary Literature and Theatre](#), Peter Lang, 2025 and [Class on Screen: The Global Working Class in Contemporary Cinema](#), Palgrave, 2020. She is the co-editor of [Creative Writing Practice: Reflections on Form and Process](#), Palgrave, 2021. Sarah is also the co-editor of the [Journal of Working-Class Studies](#). She is also the current president of the UTS branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).

**Betsy Leondar-Wright, “Class differences in Racism/Sexism Views.”**

The stereotype that white working-class Americans are more racist and sexist than professional-middle-class Americans isn't born out by evidence, but there are some class differences in approaches to gender and race questions. For our new book "Is It Racist? Is It Sexist?," Jessi Streib and I interviewed about 60 working-class white voters and about 60 college-educated professionals, asking them whether dozens of fictional scenarios and news stories were racist or sexist. While there is not a class correlation with how often interviewees say yes or no, there is or isn't racism or sexism, their degree of ideological fervor did vary by class. In addition, among those who repeatedly said yes, they saw racism or sexism, there is a class correlation in how they reached their answers and the kinds of examples they offered. This research has implications for mobilizing more white Americans to reduce inequalities and promote a fairer society in the US.

**Christina Ho, "Expanding Opportunity? Class, ethnicity and educational aspiration."**

This paper examines educational aspiration among working-class migrants and the mismatch between their definitions of success and those of the mainstream education system. It explores the educational aspirations and practices of Lebanese-Australian families in a disadvantaged area of Western Sydney. Despite their large numbers within Sydney schools, Lebanese-Australian students are dramatically under-represented in high achieving schools. They are a key target of a new initiative of the state government to increase the number of students from disadvantaged communities in academically selective schools and classes. The initiative is designed to shift parents' views on their children's education, to 'raise aspirations' and encourage them to consider applying for a selective place. This paper examines whether there is a 'lack' of aspiration among disadvantaged migrants, why they are under-represented in high achieving schools, and how the education system can better recognise and cater for diverse aspirations.

*Bio: **Christina Ho** is an Associate Professor of Social and Political Sciences who researches cultural diversity and inequality in the Australian education system. Her latest book is *Aspiration and Anxiety: Asian Migrants and Australian Schooling*.*

**Ganesh Trichur, "Class Relations and Settler-Colonial Relations."**

My paper will examine intersections between class relations and settler-colonial relations. Settler-colonial invasions are "structures", not "events", Patrick Wolfe tells us. But all invasions encounter strong resistance. The violence of ethnic cleansing is generally accompanied by the erasure of the indigenous landscape and ecosystem through "settler plants" (like the eucalyptus, cypress, and pine plantations in occupied Palestine) that construct a new culture, a new relationship with the land (Makdisi 2022). New racialized structures that emerged as a result of settler-colonial projects are nevertheless incomplete. When we gaze at Gaza, an unfinished violence accompanies re-construction of the imagined settler-colonial society, as does resistance to settler-colonial violence. These statements apply to other settler-colonial societies as well. Doesn't the settler-colonial logic of bringing order, system, and modernity to the indigenous landscape remain incomplete insofar as indigenous struggles to resist dispossession and cultural cleansing continue unabated? The anti-colonial dialectic remains unvanquished in the 21st century. What implications does

this have for the class struggle? Class struggles of course unfold within settler-colonial structures. If they emerge in the capitalist workplace, they extend outside of the workplace and are embedded in the structure of capitalist societies. How do these class struggles respond to the anti-colonial struggles? How do contemporary anti-colonial struggles inform present tendencies in the class struggle? How will the class struggle in the U.S, and in the global political economy, be shaped by the anti-colonial struggle in Palestine? These are questions that my paper will engage with.

**Iona Burnell Reilly, “Exploring the Lives and Lived Realities of Working-Class Academics in Higher Education.”**

Abstract TBC

**Jeff A. Cabusao, “Working-Class Studies and Ethnic Studies: interconnected histories.”**

In 2021, Michele Fazio, Christie Launius, Tim Strangleman published the *Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies* — a groundbreaking collection that looks back at the field’s history and at the same time anticipates new directions within working-class studies. To be sure, the *Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies* “is a timely volume that provides an overview of this interdisciplinary field that emerged in the 1990s in the context of deindustrialization, the rise of the service economy, and economic and cultural globalization.” This collection of essays also opens a space for us to re-imagine and re-think the boundaries and scope of working-class studies.

This presentation emerges from that space of re-imagining and re-thinking working-class studies. What did early manifestations of working-class studies look like prior to the 1990s? What could the history of ethnic studies (established in 1969) contribute to our understanding of the development of working-class studies? The early scholarship within the field of ethnic studies, and specifically Asian American studies, centered working-class immigrant experiences, theorized the centrality of class and race within the historical development of the United States, and theorized the global dimensions of working-class U.S. communities of color. This presentation will revisit the history of ethnic studies with an emphasis on the field of Asian American studies and the contributions of

its pioneering scholars such as Sucheng Chan, Ronald Takaki, and E. San Juan, Jr. Expanding the historical scope of working-class studies could enhance our contemporary methodological approaches within the field.

**Julie Assouly, “*American Rust*: reclaiming the *Norma Rae* legacy in bleak Pennsylvania.”**

In 1979, Martin Ritt's *Norma Rae* (based on the true story of Crystal Lee Sutton) brought attention to a working-class woman's efforts to unionize her textile factory in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, with the support of a New York attorney. The film was part of a wave of socially conscious cinema in the 1970s and became an enduring symbol for generations of women workers fighting for equal rights (Loiselle 2023). More than forty years later, Grace Poe (Laura Tierney), a seamstress in a fictional deindustrialized Pennsylvania town, leads the fight to unionize a diverse group of female workers—many of them Latino immigrants—who endure precarious conditions to keep their jobs. Unlike the social justice films of the 1970s, *American Rust* incorporates issues that were not central to earlier portrayals of the working class, such as the opioid crisis, LGBTQ+ struggles, police corruption, and white supremacy. Both works address the challenges faced by working-class characters in exploitative economic systems, spotlighting themes of personal sacrifice, collective action, and resilience. While *Norma Rae* reflects the resurgence of unionism within the labor movement of the 1970s, *American Rust* captures the economic despair of 21st-century Rust Belt America, focusing more on individual agency than collective action. This paper argues that in recent narratives like *American Rust*, the pursuit of social justice increasingly centers on individual effort—a stark contrast to the collective struggles depicted in *Norma Rae*, despite the film's titular focus on its lead character.

**Katherine Kidd, “Invisible Resistance: friendship between women in AMC's *Kevin Can F\*\*k Himself*.”**

This presentation will be an analysis of the portrayal of friendship between working-class women in the AMC series *Kevin Can Fuck Himself*. The show is an experimental hybrid – offering the male perspective in hyperpigmented multi-camera sitcom style, complete with laugh track, and presenting working-class women's perspective in a cinema-verité style crime and punishment drama. The juxtaposition of the two styles into one show works as a critique of the sitcom format's misogynistic view of working-class women. In my presentation, I will discuss the use of lighting, camera work and mise-en-scene in the two styles of the

show as modes of communicating ideas about gender and class. Through and alongside these visual analyses, I will argue that the show presents a particularly potent view of the resistive possibilities of friendship between working-class women. The main character, Allison, is an oppressed and degraded housewife, who lives an unhappy life with a husband whose world is a brightly lit sitcom that revolves around him. A radical friendship develops between Allison and her neighbor Patty, the sister of her husband's best friend, as they realize how decentered and invisible they are in the main (sitcom) text. In this, I will argue, the show indicates the potentialities of women's solidarity and the resistive power of operating "behind the scenes" of men's lives. My conference paper will fit into the "class cultures and identities" subcategory listed in the CFP, as it will pertain to portrayals of working-class women and their resistance to class and patriarchal subjugation.

**Magnus Gustafson, "Cement as a Literary Motif in Swedish Working-Class Literature."**

The production of cement involves emissions of carbon dioxide and climate impact. Today, it accounts for four percent of Sweden's greenhouse gas emissions. The history of modern society is also the history of cement. It is and has been an important building material and an industry that has created jobs. In this paper, I will do readings of Swedish working-class literature and look for traces of cement, as words and as motifs and images, and discuss cement from a class perspective and an ecocritical perspective. The aim is to use fictional examples to reflect on ecology and class and possible connections between them.

**Melissa Boehm, "The Post-Election Framing of the Working Class in the New York Times: a mixed methods study."**

Since United States Democratic Presidential Nominee Kamala Harris conceded the election to Republican Donald Trump on November 6, 2024, pundits and policymakers have offered commentary in mainstream media on how Trump succeeded to win another term. This study relates directly to the WCSA conference theme of social justice by documenting one major publication's coverage of the working class in the aftermath of a close election. Understanding media framing of marginalized groups is an important area of research because it can illuminate ideological biases of sources. This mixed method study will document the framing of the term "working class" in the New York Times from November 7, 2024, the day after Harris conceded the election to November 28, 2024. This time period was selected to determine how a major legacy publication in the United States used the term

“working class” to explain Trump’s victory in the early days after the election. A keyword search of “working class” in NexisUni on November 29, 2024 yielded 173 New York Times articles. A quantitative content analysis of each article will document the section, number of words, author’s name, sources used, and how or if “working class” was defined. A qualitative textual analysis will follow to determine major themes regarding the explanation of Trump’s victory or Harris’ loss as it relates to the working class. The presence and frequency of positive and/or negative stereotypes of the working class will also be recorded.

**Michele Fazio (Chair), “Undergraduate Research in Digital Humanities Focusing on Labour and Indigenous Communities in the Federal Writers’ Project.”**

This panel below will showcase undergraduate research in digital humanities focusing on representations of labor and Indigenous communities in the Federal Writers’ Project. Students will illustrate digital story maps on Scottish quarry workers, labor songs by Zora Neale Hurston, and Indigenous life histories. Faculty will discuss project parameters and future goals.

Participants: Ashley Allen, Mason Schweneker, Kristin Stowell and Sheena Holbrook  
Respondent: Christopher Woolley

*Bios: **Kristin L. Stowell** is an undergraduate student at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke majoring in Mass Communications Public Relations, minoring in Nonprofit Leadership and Gender Studies. She is a recipient of multiple awards including the Gene Warren Endowed Scholarship. Kristin is also a Pembroke Mellon Foundation REACH Fellow.*

**Nancy Ann Caronia, “Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli’s Tapestry: weaving a multi-generation immigration journey from Italy to Australia through a third-person memoir .”**

The use of third person in Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli’s memoir entitled tapestry (1999) elevates the multiplicity of voices in the author’s extended Italian Australian immigrant family. A memoir like Salmon Rushdie’s Joseph Anton (2012) also uses third person narration

to create a distance from the traumatic experience of living under a fatwa. In the case of tapestry, the third person narration makes room to examine the collective hardships of multiple generations of an Italian Australian family who face prejudice, including racism, whether they are in Italy or in Australia. Most especially, Maria encounters racism in the classroom, where boys chase after her and call her “dago” (118). Additionally, her parents warn her not to “trust the Italians” (1), and when she visits Italy for the first time, a Florentine shop owner is surprised that Italian Australians know how to make tomato sauce since they are no longer Italian. This prejudice is seen as fluid and internalized—since as Maria asks her parents, “Aren’t you Italian?” (1) and it winds up feeding into every encounter that Maria has with family, friends, and strangers. At a wedding reception, while eating lasagna, family members make casually racist and disparaging remarks about Arabs and Asians. Maria wonders when “the ‘Them’ became ‘We’” (127). The memories of Maria and her family members blend as threads in a tapestry, revealing a complex portrait of immigration and assimilation. The narrative choice to tell this memoir in third person brings not only a primacy to the experiences of those Italian immigrants who left Italy for Australia, but also illuminates how their life stories influenced and continue to shape their Australian born children and grandchildren.

**Owen Clayton, “Stone walls do not a prison make’: identity in US prison writing.”**

Many significant works of literature have been written in prison, yet carceral writing remains overlooked within literary studies. My thesis is that the experience of incarceration commonly leads authors to seek alternative, often communal, forms of identity through their writing. Prison is a deliberately depersonalising experience that teaches its inmates powerlessness. Prison writing fights back against this learned powerlessness, and many prison writers seek alternative forms of personhood (and must create imagined counterpublics for their work) that are not based on individual action. As feminist and disability scholars have shown, non-carceral autobiographical writings are dominated by the first-person, the ‘I’ that overcomes all challenges through sheer force of will and personality, as for example in the famous works of St Augustine or Benjamin Franklin. Yet prisoners think of themselves as ‘we’ more than ‘I’. In prison memoir, the 2nd person plural – ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘us’ and so on, comes to the forefront. This is significant given the individualist bias of autobiographical writing. This is a tendency that generally holds true across time and so is not limited to works from a particular period. Prison life writing is a literary form based around connections forged through text, taking place within a space of isolation and alienation. For its part, as I will show, prison fiction adopts techniques such as polyphony and multiple narrative perspectives to express a sense of community across time or distance.

**Paddy Gibson, CMFEU, NTEU and MUA, “Trade Union Struggle in Australia Today.”**

In this session we will hear from union activists about their struggles, campaigns and wins.

**Robert M. Zecker, “Mapping Old Left Radicalism on the Sidewalks of New York.”**

With America’s recent lurch toward fascism, with many “white ethnics” climbing aboard the MAGA express, it’s easy to forget in the early twentieth century, immigrant communities were replete with sites of socialist promise. As a corrective to reactionary amnesia, I’ve been working on creating maps of radical New York. Using Storymaps and GIS, I’ve plotted the meeting halls, workers’ schools, union headquarters, and ethnic fraternal societies that provided an institutional basis for solidarity. I shall present a demonstration of the interactive maps of New York’s radical boroughs from roughly 1920-1950. These maps plot various “left” locales, while also providing information on the significance of these sites. (If a “visitor” clicks on 317 West 125th Street, she learns this was the Harlem Community Center, where Solidarity Lodge of the International Workers Order met, and where the IWO’s Harlem Suitcase Theater presented Langston Hughes’ anti-racist play, “Don’t You Want to be Free?” A visit to 35 East 12th Street reveals in the 1930s, some of the country’s first courses in “Negro History” and working-class history were taught here, the New York Workers’ School. Moreover, I have incorporated 1940 photos of the radical institutions, which were culled from a Works Progress Administration project. Visitors can thus learn about the Pueblos Hispanos, Spanish newspaper of the Communist-affiliated IWO, but also view 1626 Madison Avenue, where the liberatory message was printed. My tour of radical New York demonstrates the critical mass of institutions where immigrants once worked to make sure another world was possible.

**Scott Henkel, “Oligarchy in America: class and social justice in W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction*.”**

My project Oligarchy in America is a literary history of the threats to democracy in the era before fascism was a widely-used term. The paper examines how American writers in the 19th century, especially W. E. B. Du Bois, understood enslavement and its legacies as a contest between oligarchy and democracy; it also argues for a retooled concept of oligarchy, which is useful for understanding the relationship between class and social justice. Before the term fascism was widespread, people used the term Bonapartism to describe authoritarian systems. Before that, people used the term oligarchy. While it has perhaps fallen out of favor today or used only to write about corruption countries other than the United States, from the rise of abolitionist movements in the 19th century through the early 20th century resistance to the emerging Jim Crow regime, writers used the term oligarchy to show how enslavement and its legacies were threats to democracy. In his landmark book *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*, Du Bois uses the term fascism and fascist each once; he uses the term oligarchy or its derivatives (oligarch, oligarchical) fifty times. Oligarchy is an old and useful concept; this project argues that interpreting it in new ways provides insights vital to understanding the literary and cultural representations of the threats to democracy. Etymologically, oligarchy is the rule of a few--in practice, it is a political, cultural, and economic system that exacerbates class inequality and threatens social justice.

**Shelly Asquith, "Workers' Experiences of Strikes in the Press."**

The paper reflects on interviews with striking workers, and union press officers, reflecting on the coverage of the 2022-2023 strike wave in the British press. The period of 2022- 2023 saw the biggest wave of strike action in Britain in almost a century, yet how contemporary media reports on trade union activity, and what effect this has on workers, remains underexplored. The study aims to bring the area of research up to date, recognising that trade unionism has seen a resurgence, while legacy news media has all but lost its industrial specialism. The paper explores the nature of news reporting of strike action in Britain, how this affects workers' experiences of strikes, and how unions respond to a changing media environment. Through interviews with trade union activists and press officers, and observational analysis, this research discusses the unique perspectives on how Europe's largest democratic body - the British union movement - seeks to establish a voice beyond the workplace.

**Stacey Mottershaw, "Social (In)justice in the Academic Pipeline for Working-Class Scholars."**

University staff and students who identify as working-class or coming from working-class backgrounds are often marginalised in higher education. Consequently, classism must be included with the broader EDI policies, procedures and guidance to create a teaching and learning community that is authentic, equitable and genuinely committed to social justice work. In particular, elite research-intensive universities can typically have heightened levels of classism, including microaggressions, due to the lack of working-class student and staff representation. However, we acknowledge that this is no simple feat. This workshop draws on recommendations from our book 'Challenging the Myths of Working-Class Identities: A Class-Conscious Practice in Higher Education' (forthcoming summer 2025) to support fellow practitioners to explore their own class-conscious practice with students and colleagues. We will discuss a broad range of recommendations for practice including class recognition; welcome and year-round induction; pastoral support; trauma, mental health and wellbeing; communication; curriculum content; careers and student futures; finances; social and extra-curricular interactions; change and transformation; student voices and research practice. The workshop will draw on our own experiences as interdisciplinary academics of working-class heritage working within an elite higher education institution, alongside contributions from a Northern UK-based working-class Student Advisory Board who we discussed and shaped the book content with. We hope that sharing practical recommendations generated by staff and student perspectives will encourage participants to reflect on their own practice and develop a more class-conscious approach to staff-student relationships.

**Stevie Downs, "Becoming a Counselling Psychologist: an IPA study of working-class women's experiences of doctoral training in the UK."**

This research explores the lived experiences of working-class women undertaking the Counselling Psychology Doctorate in the UK, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to illuminate how participants make sense of their journeys through a predominantly middle-class professional landscape. While counselling psychology aims to foster inclusivity and reflexivity, the nuanced impact of social class on trainees' identities and experiences remains underexplored.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with a small, purposively selected sample of self-identified working-class women currently enrolled in or recently graduated from UK counselling psychology doctorates. The analysis yielded three superordinate themes: "Living Between Worlds", which captures the tension between participants' class identities and the cultural expectations of the profession; "Carrying the Cost", highlighting the emotional, financial, and relational toll of training; and

“Speaking Truth to Power”, reflecting participants’ critical consciousness and their efforts to resist and reshape dominant narratives within training contexts.

The findings reveal how social class is not only a structural but also an embodied and psychological experience, influencing participants’ sense of belonging, professional identity, and mental health. This study offers insights into the complex interplay between identity, power, and meaning-making within doctoral training and calls for a more class-conscious and inclusive approach in counselling psychology education. By giving voice to a seldom-heard group within the profession, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue around equity, representation, and the lived realities of diverse trainee counselling psychologists.