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Appalachian Heritage Writer-In-Residence and Heritage Festival Bring Affrilachians and Mountain Traditions to Campus

Affrilachian poet and fiction writer Crystal Wilkinson worked with the Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities throughout 2019 to create programs and the heritage website, pick State Fiction Competition winners, and create the 2020 Anthology of Appalachian Writers Volume XII (see www.shepherd.edu/ahwirweb/wilkinson). The focus of these heritage programs has been on the Affrilachian influence in Appalachia.

Among the programs during the September Festival week were a September 20 community discussion of Toni Morrison’s Beloved and the award-winning film, led by Dr. Julia Sandy (History); a September 23 program on mental health issues in the Black community with Dr. Alfiee Breland-Noble, “Mama Just Won’t Accept This: Mental Illness in the Black Community”; a community discussion about race relations with Dr. Chaquita Howard-Bostic, “Tumbling Monuments, Fractious Politics, Post Obama and Black Lives Matter”; and “An Evening with Appalachian and African American Storytelling: Where the Twain Shall Meet” with Adam Booth and Diane Macklin.

Also during the week were the traditional programs associated with the AHWIR and Festival week. These included the “Writer’s Life,” “Anthology Celebration in Song and Words,” “The Writer’s Master Class, and readings and programs throughout the Eastern Panhandle with Crystal Wilkinson. Wilkinson received the Appalachian Heritage Writer’s Award on September 26 and delivered the Scarborough Society Lecture, “Everybody’s Street and Being Black in Appalachia.”

The Appalachian Heritage Festival and Concert were packed with stars from the region, including MacArthur Genius recipient Corey Harris, who presented “Roots of the Blues in Appalachia” on Saturday, September 21. Others headlining the concert and Saturday Festival activities were The Main Line Gravy Soppers exploring string band traditions in the region and Chelsea McBee and the Whomevers. The Heritage Festival Concert is part of the Performing Arts Series at Shepherd, led by Rachael Meads.

The Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence and Festival events were funded by the Shepherd University Foundation, the West Virginia Humanities Council, the West Virginia Center for the Book, Student Affairs, and private donations from the community and the Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities.

Shepherd’s Global Appalachia Program Creates Dual Degree Component With University of West of Scotland

This spring the first student to benefit from the partnership between Shepherd University and the University of the West of Scotland will receive his M.A. in Appalachian Studies as an M.A. in creative media practice from UWS. UWS uses Shepherd’s APST Graduate Certificate, the first module of the Shepherd degree, as the first module of their M.A. program, while Shepherd uses the study abroad semester from UWS to complete the full elective requirement for the APST M.A. In approximately the same amount of time, the student can walk away with two M.A. degrees from these partnering institutions, along with a wealth of understanding about our Appalachia’s Celtic roots.
New Project Features Irwin’s “Storied Life”; Students Conduct Shepherd Speaks Interviews

The Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities launched its second year participating in the National StoryCorps project. The Shepherd Speaks story-sharing launch on November 1 featured Catherine Irwin’s “Storied Life” and a community orientation to the StoryCorps project. At the November 1 program in the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education, Ally Wharton, student facilitator of the project, talked about best practices in oral storytelling, after which Irwin, CATF administrator for a decade, development director at Arena Stage, and longtime National Organization of Women official, shared stories about John Lennon, Yoko Ono, Betty Friedan, and others in her “storied life.” Irwin lives today in Shepherdstown, is a member of the Shepherdstown Area Independent Living (SAIL) organization and conceived the SAIL Hear This, Telling Stories Across Generations program.

The week following the launch, Shepherd APST students conducted interviews across campus for four days, November 4-7, in the Shepherd Speaks Story Van. Graduate students Jan Stevens and Rebecca Calloway, joined by APST minors Madison Hale, Chloe Johnson, Taylor Kuhn, Patrick Fuller, and Leanna Bayse, facilitated the interviews, with Ally Wharton organizing the students and training them in oral history storytelling. The Shepherd Speaks StoryCorps project will be a yearly feature from the center.

Appalachian Studies
Spring Courses

Appalachian Culture
41014/40798 APST 256/356
(Core 2nd Tier Hum, MD) 3 credits
Monday, 6-8:40 p.m.
Knutti 203, Meads

Art of Storytelling and Folktales
40616/40797 APST 345/545
(Core 2nd Tier Arts, MD) 3 credits
Tuesday, 6-8:40 p.m.
Knutti 205, Booth

West Virginia and Appalachian Region
40564 APST/HIST 309-01
3 credits
Tuesday and Thursday, 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
TBA, Bankhurst

Appalachia/Time, Place, and People
41326/41327 APST 400/501
3 credits
Monday and Wednesday, 4:30-5:45 p.m.
Erma Ora Byrd Hall 112, Shurbutt

Appalachian Studies Practicum
40393/40933 APST 476/576-01
1-3 credits
TBA, Shurbutt

Alternative Spring Break
40641/41369 APST 476/576-02
3 credits
TBA, Shurbutt

Appalachian Studies, M.A.
http://catalog.shepherd.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=13&poid=1565&returnto=2199

Appalachian Studies Minor
http://catalog.shepherd.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=13&poid=1178&returnto=2195

Enjoy an experience of a lifetime, service learning at its best, through alternative spring break—receive course credit for your service through the APST 476/576-02 course.
Alumna Ashley Wilkins '16 (l.) joined Marc Harshman, West Virginia Poet Laureate, and Dr. Sylvia Bailey Shurbutt, director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities, to read from the Anthology of Appalachian Writers, Karen Zacharias Volume XI, at Hardy County Heritage Festival, Saturday, September 28.

Appalachian Studies student board member Allison Wharton is shown above with Crystal Wilkinson at Scarborough Society keynote event, “Everybody’s Street and Being Black in Appalachia, on September 26.

Crystal Wilkinson with Eastern Panhandle High School Teachers and their students on September 25 at Martinsburg High School. Water Street was the 2019 State Common Read, One Book One West Virginia program. See the One Book One WV program at https://librarycommission.wv.gov/what/wcf/ftb/Pages/One-Book-One-West-Virginia.aspx.

Appalachian Literature students take a break at Hawks Nest on the Appalachian Studies Roadtrip, sponsored by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities. The October 11-12 roadtrip took students to the West Virginia Culture Center in Charleston, Thurmond Railroad National Park, Tamarack, the New River Bridge Welcome Center, and the Beckley Coal Museum. Highlights of the trip included a journey to the bottom of the New River Gorge and a trek into a coal mine.


Rachael Meads interviewed West Virginia Public Broadcasting’s Russ Barbour and storyteller Adam Booth after a screening of In Tune, October 21, 2019, at the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History. The documentary was created by West Virginia Public Broadcasting to complement the Ken Burns Country Music series. For details, see www.shepherd.edu/news/screening-of-wvpb-documentary-in-tune-planned-for-october-21.

Emily Hilliard, West Virginia folklorist, talked about Appalachian Foodways and the new book The Food We Eat, The Stories We Tell on November 6 at the Byrd CHE. See details at www.shepherd.edu/news/west-virginia-state-folklorist-to-discuss-appalachian-food-november-7.

Crystal Wilkinson (WV Common Read Author) and Karen Goff (West Virginia Center for the Book) with WV Fiction Competition winners at Scarborough Society Lecture and Awards event: Jessica Salfia, Martinsburg, first prize; Jordan Carter, Morgantown, second prize; and Sean Duffy, Wheeling, third prize. For competition details, see https://www.shepherd.edu/news/winners-of-2019-west-virginia-fiction-competition-announced.

Anthology editors nominated three Appalachian writers from the 2019 volume of the Anthology of Appalachian Writers, Karen Spears Volume XI, for Pushcart Awards. These writers include West Virginia fiction writer Ginny Fite for “The Physics of Things,” Kentucky poet Jayne Moore Waldrop for “Mantle of Invisibility” and “Eclipse,” and West Virginia Poet Laureate Marc Harshman for “With Edgar Allan as Our Usher . . .” and “Traffic Stop with DUI.” The Pushcart Prize is a national award for anthologized writers who exhibit superior craft and skill.