

# Speaking of Kansas

## Washburn Center for Kansas Studies



## Kansas Studies Newsletter

Fall 2018

### Kansas Studies Courses Spring Semester 2019

#### KS 199A:

**KS and Sate and Local Government**, CRN 12988, MWF  
11-11:50, Clark Duffy

**KS 395: Independent Study-Kansas Studies**, CRN 12392,  
arranged

**KS 397: Internship in Kansas Studies**, CRN 12396, arranged

#### KS 399A:

**Kansas History**, CRN 12406, TH 11-12:30, Bruce Mactavish

#### KS 399B:

**Kansas Archaeology**, CRN 12407, T 4-6:30, Laura Murphy

#### KS 399C/HI 300:

**U.S. Women's Movements in the 1970s and 1980s**, CRN 12408,  
TR 9:30-10:45, Kerry Wynn

Vanessa Steinroetter/Kelly Erby  
Co-Directors  
cks@washburn.edu

Deborah Altus, Human Services  
Tom Averill, English  
Bob Beatty, Political Science  
Roy Bird, KHC Speaker  
Chris Bowers, Military Student Success  
Marcia Cebulka, Playwright  
Jeannie Chinn, KSHS  
Stacy Conner, Human Services  
Virgil Dean, KSHS  
Dennis Etzel, Jr., English  
Kelly Erby, History  
Jia Feng, Geography  
Connie Gibbons, Mulvane Art Museum  
William Gilliland, Geology  
Rachel Goossen, History  
Chris Hamilton, Political Science  
Jonathan Hart, History  
Danielle Head, Art  
Bob Hoard, Sociology/Anthropology  
Lindsey Ibanez, Sociology  
Jim Kelly, KTWU  
Robert Hull, Finance  
David Kendall, Film Producer  
Louise Krug, English  
Gabrielle Lunte, Modern Languages  
Bruce Mactavish, History  
Judith McConnell-Farmer, Education  
Eric McHenry, English  
Debra Mikulka, KAN TRAIN Grant Mgmt.  
Annie Miller, Political Science  
Linsey Moddelmog, Political Science  
Laura Murphy, Anthropology  
Marguerite Perret, Art  
Mark Peterson, Political Science  
Leslie Reynard, Communications  
Betsy Roe, TSCPL  
Tom Schmiedeler, Geography  
Robin Shrimplin, History  
Bradley Siebert, English  
Sarah Smarsh, Author  
Vanessa Steinroetter, English  
Laura Stephenson, Dean, CAS  
Margaret Stewart, English  
Nancy Tate, VP, Academic Affairs  
Kelly Watt, Art  
David Winchester, Mabee Library  
Kerry Wynn, History  
Carol Yoho, Web Editor  
**Center for Kansas Studies**  
[www.washburn.edu/cks](http://www.washburn.edu/cks)

## Panel Discussion: "Flatlander"

**Panel Discussion**



MULVANE ART MUSEUM



John Hitchcock  
Wild Horse Rd. 2017  
Flatlander - Belonging to the Land Exhibition

**Wednesday, November 14, 2018**  
**Meditations on Land and Identity**  
3:30 - 5:00 PM  
2nd Floor North Gallery, Mulvane Art Museum

Join panelists for a discussion about the significance of the land and identity in art, literature, and politics.  
Panelist: Marguerite Perret, Vanessa Steinroetter, Izzy Wasserstein, Kerry Wynn.  
Moderated by Kelly Erby.

**MAM**  
Visit our Website

Mulvane Art Museum | Washburn University | 785.670.2427 | [mulvane.info@washburn.edu](mailto:mulvane.info@washburn.edu)  
STAY CONNECTED

CKS fellows **Marguerite Perret**, **Vanessa Steinroetter**, and **Kerry Wynn**, along with lecturer in the Department of English **Izzy Wasserstein**, took part in a panel discussion inspired by the **Flatlander: Belonging to the Land** exhibit by artist **John Hitchcock** on view at **Washburn's Mulvane Museum** this fall semester. The discussion, entitled **"Meditations on Land and Identity,"** considered the significance of the land and identity in history, art, literature, and politics. It was moderated by fellow **Kelly Erby**.

# Fellows News

CKS fellow **Bob Beatty** of the Washburn University Political Science department had his editorial printed in the Sunday, November 24, 2018 **Topeka Capital Journal**. Beatty started:

“With Kansas having several of the most contested election races in its history in 2018, record amounts of money were spent by candidates and political action committees (PACs).

Most of that money was spent on political TV ads. Even with the increased influence of social media, television still remains the go-to venue to spread a message for or against a candidate, and from April to November (yes, the first TV ad to run in Kansas was in April, by a pro-Ken Selzer PAC) the state was blanketed with campaign ads.”

The editorial then shared Beatty’s choices of five notable TV ads from November’s mid-term election. Read details about these five ads online at: <https://www.cjonline.com/opinion/20181124/bob-beatty-ads-that-mattered-during-2018-campaign>

**Also of note:** Beatty has overseen posting of nearly every mid-term election ad onto YouTube, with links to each made available at **Washburn’s “Kansas Institute of Politics” web site:** <https://washburn.edu/reference/cks/politics/ads.html>

CKS fellow **Rachel Goossen** was featured speaker on October 21-22 for the **66th Menno Simons Lectures** at **Bethel College** in North Newton, Kansas. Goossen titled her series “**Sexual Identities and Leaders in the Faith,**”



and the presentations are available online: <https://www.bethelks.edu/academics/convocation-lectures/menno-simons-lectures>

Since the Menno Simons Endowment was established in 1950, Goossen is the sixth Kansan, and the sixth woman, to present these lectures, which focus on Anabaptist-Mennonite history, thought, life and culture, both past and present.

On November 7th, Goossen moderated the Vietnam-Era Veterans Oral History Project panel discussion event at Johnson County Community College, featuring JCCC staff members who served during the Vietnam Era. This project is sponsored by Humanities Kansas, in partnership with the

Veteran History Project at the Library of Congress and the Veterans Voices Writing Project.

On November 12, 2018, the CKS was delighted to host guest speaker **Dr. Tom Lynch**, Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and editor of the scholarly journal *Western American Literature*.

Dr. Lynch, whose research focuses on ecocritical and place-conscious approaches to literary studies, is currently working on a book that analyzes literature of the American West and the Australian Outback in terms of settler-colonial theory. He shared some of his research findings on fascinating parallels between settler narratives from the Great Plains and the Australian Outback with the students in KS340/HI300: Life and Death on a Kansas Homestead and then presented his talk “The Lilac by the Door: Ecocriticism, Grasslands, and Women’s Settler Colonial Narratives in the U.S. and Australia” at a public event on campus.



The Center for Kansas Studies presents:

**“The Lilac by the Door: Ecocriticism, Grasslands, and Women’s Settler Colonial Narratives in the U.S. and Australia”**

A presentation by Dr. Tom Lynch, Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

November 12, 2018, 2:30 pm  
Shawnee Room (Memorial Union)

Free and open to the public!

# Fellows News

This fall, CKS co-directors **Kelly Erby** and **Vanessa Steinroetter** team-taught the Kansas Studies course KS340: **Introduction to Kansas Studies: Life and Death on a Kansas Homestead**. Using the town of **Prairie City**, founded in 1855, as its focus, the course utilized the methods of both micro- and macro-history to examine the social, political, economic, and cultural history of homesteading and the American West in the second half of the nineteenth century.

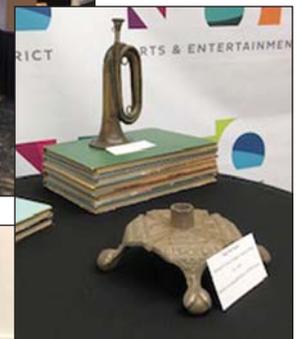
Students practiced archival research using a wide variety of digitized primary sources, including census records, land patents, and newspapers. Students also honed their skills of literary interpretation by reading texts such as Ole Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth* and William Allen White's "A Story of the Highlands." The class included two fieldtrips (pictured here), one to the **Arabia Steamboat Museum** in Kansas City, and another to the **Baldwin City Depot** and **Prairie City Cemetery**. This multi-disciplinary, experience-rich course fulfilled requirements for both the minor program in Kansas Studies and general education while introducing students to some of the major themes and distinctive trends in Kansas studies.



This November, the **Center for Kansas Studies**, together with **Washburn's Department of History**, co-sponsored an exhibit commemorating the **end of World War I** at the **NOTO Arts Center**. The exhibit, curated by student **Elly Sharemet**, focused on Topeka's role in the Great War and what the war meant to Topeka by telling the personal stories of World War I through the experiences of people from Topeka—soldiers, doctors, and nurses, as well as citizens of the homefront. The exhibit featured personal artifacts from local Topeka.



Left: **Elly Sharemet**, curator of WWI display.



Right: Display at NOTO Arts Center.

# “Loving Buster Keaton & American Silent Film”

—Article by **Carol Yoho**, CKS fellow

From 1993 to 2017, the Bowlus Fine Arts Center in Iola, Kansas, sponsored the Buster Keaton Celebration annually—twenty-four years in total. The celebration focused through the years on many different aspects of Keaton’s life, including his birth in nearby Piqua, Kansas, and years spent as a child actor touring in his family’s vaudeville act. As a young adult Keaton was introduced to the art of making silent comedy films by fellow native Kansan Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle. He took a break from filmmaking to serve in the U.S. Army during WWI and then began to write and direct his own movies. His feature films, made in the 1920s, launched him to become one of the world’s best-loved movie comedians. Keaton’s fame faded as talking pictures were introduced in the early 1930s, but he stayed busy on both stage and screen. He made a comeback and was featured on television and in full-color movies of the 1960s. He died, at the age of seventy, in 1966.

The Bowlus Fine Arts Center’s annual celebration included lectures by college professors, memories shared by Keaton’s family and friends, and showings of a variety of his silent and talking movies. His silent films were projected at the Bowlus facility with live musical accompaniment.

When Bowlus stopped hosting the Keaton event after 2017, two non-profit groups (the Kansas City Theatre Pipe Organ, Inc. and Kansas Silent Film Festival, Inc.) decided to continue honoring Keaton’s life with a twenty-fifth Buster Keaton Commemoration, held at the Kansas City Music Hall in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, on Saturday, September 15, 2018. The event teamed a celebration of Keaton with one of his fellow movie comedians, W.C. Fields.

The Kansas City Music Hall was an excellent location, reflecting deco-era architecture in vogue at the time when both comedians were popular with the movie-going public. The program included lectures by Frank Scheide, professor at the University of Arkansas, and Hooman Mahran, who serves on the Board of Directors of Silent Cinema Presentations, USA. The life and work of Fields were discussed by his grandsons Allen and Ronald Fields. Memories of Keaton were shared by his nephew Harry Keaton, his daughter-in-law Barbara Talmadge, and his only granddaughter, Melissa Talmadge Cox.



1 – Planners and presenters pose at the entrance of The Bowlus Fine Arts Center, Iola, KS.



2 – Keaton fans pose behind a plaque mounted in Piqua, KS honoring his birth in 1895.



3 – This “Buster Keaton in Kansas City” logo was used to advertise the 25th Keaton Commemoration.

4 – Hooman Mahran interviews family members Barbara Talmadge, Melissa Talmadge Cox and Harry Keaton about their memories of Buster.



The full-day event included showing several movies accompanied by music played on the Music Hall’s magnificent built-in theatre organ. Many people who had regularly attended Keaton’s Iola events also attended this year. New attendees were welcomed, entertained and enlightened by the program as well.

Kansas Silent Film Festival, Inc., co-sponsor of Kansas City’s Keaton event, also teamed recently with The Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library for their twenty-first annual “Silents in the Cathedral” event at Topeka’s Grace Cathedral, held on Friday evening, October 26, 2018. Short subjects included *The Ghost*

## “Keaton” -cont.

of *Slumber Mountain* (1918), an early animation depicting dinosaurs thriving among humans. In a surprise for Keaton fans, edited-together caveman sequences were shown from his first feature-length silent film, *The Three Ages* (1923). The third short subject was *Flying Elephants* (1927), with Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, who also played cavemen. *The Lost World* (1925) was the evening's feature film. It also incorporated live actors and animated dinosaurs, but was done with more sophistication than *The Ghost of Slumber Mountain*, made thirteen years earlier. Marvin Faulwell provided live musical accompaniment for all films on

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5 – **Allan Fields** and **Ron Fields** speak onstage about their grandfather, W.C. Fields.



6 – This theatre organ, built into the **Music Hall of Kansas City**, is used to accompany showings of silent film.



7 – Musicians **Bob Keckeisen** and **Marvin Faulwell** pose at “Silents in the Cathedral” with **Melanie Lawrence**, wearing her dinosaur costume.



the church's pipe organ, and Bob Keckeisen added percussion affects.

Kansas Silent Film Festival, Inc. has also had a long association with Washburn University. Their twenty-third Annual Kansas Silent Film Festival will be held in White Concert Hall on Washburn's campus on Friday evening, February 22 and all day on Saturday, February 23, 2019. The theme of this event is “Lost Films,” and a program schedule will be posted onto the festival's web site ([www.kssilentfilmfest.org](http://www.kssilentfilmfest.org)) in January. This is a free event, and everyone is welcome to attend. 

## CKS Meeting Summaries

### September 13, 2018, Lincoln Room

- I. Meeting called to order 12:20 PM
- II. Updates from CKS Fellows
  - a. **Marcia Cebulska** traveled this summer to Italy and recently returned from a trip to California. In the meantime she has been writing.
  - b. **Annie Miller** recently moved to Topeka to take a position in Political Science Department. Her research examines the problem of human trafficking, as well as hate and extremist groups, in Kansas and other states. She is currently teaching State and Local Government for Political Science.
  - c. **Louise Krug** is working on a new project involving anonymous oral histories of women regarding their body insecurities.
  - d. **Kerry Wynn** received (with Tom Averill) a grant from Humanities Kansas to revamp the Map of Kansas Literature website.
  - e. **Margueritte Perret** has been commissioned by Oklahoma state to produce a show called “The State We're In,” focusing on water issues. She is excited about the possibility of expanding this work to other states, including Kansas.
  - f. **Laura Murphy** is continuing to work with students on two Kansas archaeological sites: one in Meade County, and one in Rice County. The Rice County site is an approximately 400–500 year old ancestral Wichita site, similar to several known Spanish-contact sites documented in the Arkansas River valley near Arkansas City, Kansas, where it has been reported in the media that the “Lost City of Etzanao” has been found. Continuing archaeological research this summer will help place these ancestral Wichita artifacts into context.
  - g. **Bruce Mactavish** continues to regularly teach Kansas history. He has been working on some public history projects, including the unveiling of a Bob Dole statue on Washburn's campus and a statue of McKinley Burnett.
  - h. **Bob Beatty** is finishing his documentary on Kathleen Sebelius. He continues to work on his Kansas Politics archive, which contains over 1000 campaign commercials of Kansas political candidates.
  - i. **Rebecca Manning** is now the collections manager and registrar at the Mulvane. She recently curated

Continued on p. 6 ▶

# CKS Meeting Summaries

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## September 13, 2018 -cont.

- an exhibit called *The Land was Broken* at the Mulvane to complement the read book, *The Worst Hard Time*, by Tim Egan.
- j. **Connie Gibbons** continues to direct the Mulvane Art Museum on campus, which has hosted some important work lately related to Kansas, including John Hithcock's *Flatlander: Belonging to the Land*.
  - k. **Rachel Goossen** is working on a new project about Mennonite inclusion and exclusion of LGBTQ people. She is giving a series of lectures at Bethel College on this topic this month.
  - l. **Tom Averill** received (with Kerry Wynn) a grant from Humanities Kansas to revamp the Map of Kansas Literature website. Also as part of this grant project, he will organize programming around the state. He has been working to get a landmark for Gwendolyn Brooks in the Ward-Mead Garden. Averill reminded fellows of the annual Kansas Book Award, which is currently taking submissions in the category of poetry this year.
  - m. **Deborah Altus** continues to chair the Department of Human Services and to work on projects related to aging in Kansas.
  - n. **Vanessa Steinroetter** continues to co-direct (with Kelly Erby) CKS. She and Erby are co-teaching an interdisciplinary, experience-rich course this semester called *Life and Death* on a Kansas Homestead. Steinroetter recently submitted an essay focusing on prairie madness in literature and its ties to eco-criticism for publication.
  - o. **Kelly Erby** completed research about food in early Kansas, focusing on Lawrence, and will be giving a talk about it at the Watkins Museum in Lawrence on Sept. 28.
- III. Erby and Steinroetter encouraged fellows to submit their relevant spring courses for cross listing with KS
  - IV. Averill updated fellows about the Haldeman-Julius symposium at Pittsburgh State in March
  - V. Erby updated fellows about Themester 2019
  - VI. Erby and Steinroetter encouraged fellows to submit stories for the fall newsletter.
  - VII. Funding Requests
    - a. Averill's request for \$250 to support the Haldeman Julius symposium was approved. Averill is going to inquire if CKS can sponsor a coffee break or other refreshments.
    - b. Averill's request for \$200 to student Jason Hanna was approved.
    - c. Mactavish's request for \$400 to support transcription of remarks at the Bob Dole statue unveiling for live streaming was approved.
    - d. Head's request for \$500 to support new research was approved.
  - VIII. Meeting adjourned at 1:08 PM
- Respectfully submitted by Kelly Erby

## November 15, 2018, Cottonwood Room

- I. Meeting called to order at 12:15 p.m.
- II. Updates from CKS Fellows
  - a. **Vanessa Steinroetter** recently participated in a panel discussion at the Mulvane Museum entitled "Meditations on Land and Identity" and co-organized a CKS lecture by Tom Lynch, professor of English at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Steinroetter is also co-teaching the homesteading class with CKS co-director Kelly Erby.
  - b. **Marcia Cebulka** will travel to the Phoenix Theater in Indianapolis to workshop her play *The Bones of Butterflies* and explore its possible production there. Cebulka's authorship of this play was partially supported by a CKS grant. Cebulka also received support to write *Rooted*, a play about the post-tornado experience in Greenville. She is working with musical artist Kelly Hunt to transform this play into a musical.
  - c. **Tom Averill** attended the Western Literary Association meeting, where he presented on his novel *Found Documents*. He continues to work on the Map of Kansas Literature Project with Wynn, which received a Humanities Kansas grant. He is seeking nominations for the Kansas Book Poetry Award in Poetry and recently recorded another *Oleander* commentary for KPR.
  - d. **Danielle Head** will give an artist presentation at a university in Minnesota. She has started work on a new project which has received funding from CKS, traveling to Eureka, KS and Excelsior Springs in MO.
  - e. **Stacy Conner** is a new CKS fellow from the Department of Human Services. She is interested in pursuing research about how communities in Kansas respond to addictions.

# CKS Meeting Summaries —cont.

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- f. **Rachel Goossen** announced that the regional History Day competition will take place at Washburn on Feb. 23. The theme is Triumph and Tragedy. Contact her if interested in judging. She is teaching her course Remembering Vietnam for the second time next semester. Her husband Duane Goossen, a former Kansas Day speaker, is now working with the transition team for Laura Kelly, putting together a new government.
- g. **Judy McConnell-Farmer**'s work recently has been international rather than state-focused, but she does continue to work on a project examining the life of Exoduster Lulu Sadler Craig. McConnell has a sabbatical next semester and hopes to return to this project
- h. **Ramon Powers** continues to work on the Kansas Oral History Project interviewing former legislators. The group just finished a year of interviews—8 in total—and is currently looking for a new interviewee.
- i. **Tom Schmiedeler** traveled to Kent this summer, where he became inspired to start taking photos of windows. He recently showed several of these photos at the annual Lawrence Art Walk. He continues to work on his county seat research. He taught three classes this fall for the Osher Institute.
- j. **Carol Yoho** attended the twenty-fifth annual Buster Keaton Celebration, held in Kansas City, Missouri, this year (after a twenty-four-year run in Iola, KS). Yoho also traveled to Muskegon in October for another event about Keaton (who spent summers there). Yoho also helped ring the school bell on the historical grounds on 11/11.
- k. **Will Gilliland** plans to redo two geologic displays on the first floor of Stouffer Hall this winter. He will attend the Kansas Hydrology Seminar out at the Historical Society tomorrow. He continues to lead field trips to important geologic sites in Kansas and serves as an officer in the Topeka Gem and Mineral Society. He announced that his wife's wrist is now healed.
- l. **Kelly Erby** continues to pursue research related to food in early territorial Kansas. In September, she presented at the Watkins Museum in Lawrence as part of a new exhibit related to food.
- m. **Laura Murphy** is teaching Kansas Archaeology in the spring. She will be turning

this course into a High-Impact Community Engagement Practices (HICEP) course for spring 2020. Students will revive Kansas Archaeology Month in April and work with the Kansas State Historical Society to create new displays as well as promotion materials. Murphy also announced she has partnered with the KSHS to work at an archaeological site in Rice County of significant importance.

- III. Funding Requests- none
- IV. Updates about Fall 2018 CKS Events
- V. a. Tom Lynch Lecture November 12. Lynch visited Steinroetter and Erby's Life and Death on a Kansas Homestead course and presented a lecture entitled "The Lilac by the Door: Ecocriticism, Grasslands, and Women's Settler Colonial Narratives in the United States and Australia."
- b. "Meditations on Land and Identity" Panel on November 14 at the Mulvane. This discussion was inspired by the current Mulvane Exhibit by artist John Hitchcock entitled "Flatlander: Belonging to the Land." Panelists included Vanessa Steinroetter, Kerry Wynn, Izzy Wasserstein, Marguerite Perret and was moderated by Kelly Erby.
- VI. Call for 2019 Kansas Day Speaker nominations- Erby asked that fellows continue to send nominations to her via email.
- VII. Carol Yoho announced the deadline for newsletter stories is November 26.
- VIII. Next CKS meeting will be Jan. 23 at noon.
- IX. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Kelly Erby

**Details will  
be shared  
early in  
Spring  
Semester**



WASHBURN UNIVERSITY  
1700 SW COLLEGE AV  
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66621

Center for Kansas Studies

*Speaking of Kansas*

Fall 2018

Details will be shared  
early in Spring Semester



**Thomas Fox Averill** edited a limited edition copy of *The Bender Hills Mystery*, an account of the Bender murders perpetrated northeast of Cherryvale, Kansas, at a cabin that served as bed and board, hosted by John Bender, his wife, and their two children, John and Kate. Daughter Kate was a spiritualist who told fortunes and lectured in neighboring towns. The unsolved disappearance of travelers in the area had been reported. In April of 1873, Dr. William York, once a Kansas legislator, of nearby Independence, determined to investigate the disappearance of his brother. He pinpointed the Bender farm and gathered a posse of 50 men, but was turned away. Later, when it became evident that the Benders had fled in haste, the men entered the home and found a blood-stained cellar pit. Reportedly, victims were seated at a table with a canvas partition behind them, then were bludgeoned by hammers, and, once felled, their throats were slit and the bodies temporarily dumped in the cellar. The group of men later dug up eleven bodies in the back yard of the cabin. The Benders were never apprehended, and their “trail” was followed to Michigan, Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska, Colorado and California, among other places.

*The Bender Hills Mystery* is an “as told to” account of Leroy Dick’s investigation of the Bender

murders and flight. Although printed in the *Parsons Sun* in 1934 (and reprinted in 1962), and sections reprinted in the *Little Balkans Review*, the amazingly detailed account has largely been forgotten.

When the Bender Hills Mystery manuscript came into the hands of family member **Jodi Smith**, great-great granddaughter of Leroy Dick, she knew it should see publication, including family photographs and documents. To this day she still hears stories of people driving the Cherryvale countryside, going over “Bender’s Mound,” the hair on their necks rising.

Averill agreed to edit the manuscript, and Center Fellow **Carol Yoho** donated the design work for the book. The Friends of Mabee Library helped finance the publication, now a part of the Thomas Fox Averill Kansas Studies Collection at Washburn University.

