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Mississippi Undergraduate Honors Conference

MUHC 2022 Back to the Future: Moving
Forward with Academic Inquiry

Feb 5th, 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Oral Presentations: Humanities

Jacob Dunahue
Northeast Mississippi Community College

Faith Langford
Mississippi University for Women

Kathryn Scharwath
Pearl River Community College

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MUHC 2022: Oral Presentations Humanities

Jacob Dunahue, Northeast Mississippi Community College

American News Media: How It Has Changed and How It Has Influenced the Nation

Since the United States' infancy, the news media has played a vital role in keeping the public informed and influencing the country as a whole, although the American media's national function has significantly changed over time. Originally, newspapers in the colonial United States inspired the American Revolution; later on, some media outlets decided that muddying up a story's facts was the best way to sell newspapers and influence their readers. In 1898, the *New York Journal* and *New York World* used yellow journalism to inspire America's leaders to declare war on Spain. Although, during the Vietnam War, on-the-ground media coverage of the combat helped strengthen an anti-war movement that eventually led to the end of the war. Later, with the shift to 24-hour news broadcasting, news channels and publishers began running out of stories to cover; they had to find a way to retain readers and watchers. In modern day, many news outlets have resorted to only sharing specific viewpoints and stories, and some even intentionally mislead their audience. This has caused numerous American news consumers to become drowned out to alternate viewpoints, and, at worst, misinformed Americans to resort to violence to satiate their conspiracy-driven alarm and paranoia.

Faith Langford, Mississippi University for Women

Constructing Multidimensional Utopias: Spaces of Reform in Margaret Atwood's Hag-Seed

My research explores the concept of utopia as used by Margaret Atwood in her novel *Hag-Seed* (2016), an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611). *Hag-Seed*, set in a prison's literacy program through which Shakespearean plays are taught, involves characters, namely Felix, the protagonist and counterpart to Prospero, both consciously thinking about their lives and influencing those around them. Atwood expands the notion of utopia through her use of setting and characters to include ways in which society can be reconstructed from existing social hierarchies. The novel also employs spaces that are contemporary and familiar, such as prisons, prison reform programs, and technology, to further the notion that entirely "new" worlds do not have to be explored to recreate society. Building off the association of technological advancement with dystopic fiction, the novel also explores the boundaries between utopia and dystopia. Yet, Atwood's text depicts the interconnectedness of utopia and dystopia and understands that individual perspectives rather than communal values influence these two constructs. Engaging with more than just rethinking theories and social constructs, *Hag-Seed* embraces themes significant to our world today from prison reform programs to the possibilities offered by technology.

Kathryn Scharwath, Pearl River Community College

Debs, Cleveland, and Public: Views of Socialism from the Pullman Strike

The presentation will explore the rhetoric of Eugene V. Debs, Grover Cleveland, and others related to the Pullman Strike of 1894 in an effort to understand both the promise and the rejection of American socialism in its early years.