



Western Oregon
UNIVERSITY



Mario and Alma Pastega Faculty Excellence Awards

May 24, 2023 · Pastega Room

Richard Woodcock Education Center

Welcome

2020-22 Pastega Recipient Recognition

Provost Rob Winningham

Pastega Award Presentations

Introductions by Dr. Hillary Fouts, Dean of Graduate Studies & Research

Excellence in Teaching

Misty Weitzel

Excellence in Scholarship

Isidore Lobnibe

Excellence in Service

Leigh Graziano

Closing remarks

President Jesse Peters

Special thanks to the members of the Pastega Awards Committee

Breeann Flesch • Erin Baumgartner • Gareth Hopkins • Jaime Cloud
Melanie Landon-Hays • Keats Chaves (ex-officio)

2023 Pastega Faculty Award
Excellence in Teaching

Misty Weitzel **Professor of Criminal Justice**



THOUGH SHE KNEW that most anthropologists ended up teaching, Misty A. Weitzel, Ph.D., didn't think she'd be one of them.

Hailing from Sandy, Oregon, she was eager to travel and learn about the wider world.

While earning a Ph.D in archeology and physical anthropology at the University of Alberta, Edmonton Weitzel had the opportunity to do

both. She traveled to Siberia to excavate and analyze Bronze Age skeletons and to Cyprus to study remains at burial sites.

Now as a professor of Criminal Justice, Forensic Anthropology and the Graduate Program Coordinator in the Criminal Justice Sciences Division at WOU, Weitzel applies these skills and methods to forensic anthropology.

"I was in denial about teaching," she says with a laugh. "But I needed to go through that journey to figure out that teaching is actually something I really love to do."

That gradual journey started at Oregon State University, where she was an early adopter of online learning, and received accolades for her innovative approaches to education. Since joining Western's faculty in 2012, Weitzel has continued to seek innovative ways to engage students.

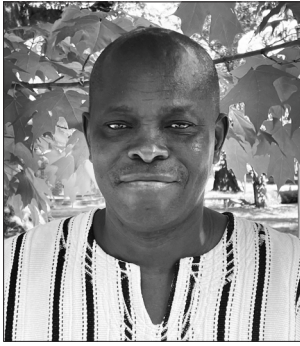
She developed the forensic anthropology minor and concentration, and teaches courses ranging from Introduction to Forensic Anthropology to the capstone course for graduate students in Criminal Justice. This is Weitzel's fifth year as Graduate Coordinator.

Forensic anthropology is a discipline theoretically grounded in human evolution, so it's fitting that personal evolution is central to Weitzel's teaching philosophy.

"To be effective teachers, we need to evolve," she says. "There are so many selective pressures at work: COVID, social media, political, social and environmental issues. If we fight against them, we aren't going to get very far. I try to find ways – whether it's technology or just being a very caring person in the classroom – to meet the changing needs of academia and our students."

During COVID quarantine, Weitzel and her colleague Jerielle Cartales launched a podcast, *Cabin Femur: Forensic Anthropology in The Age of Quarantine*, to connect with students and feature their work. She also advocated successfully for the addition of a Race & Justice course to the Criminal Justice core curriculum.

"I really love creating assignments or just capitalizing on what students enjoy most about the material, in a way that I never did when I was teaching 18 years ago," she says. "They get inspired and I get inspired. Giving them different ways to do that is really beneficial for all of us."



2023 Pastega Faculty Award
Excellence in Scholarship

Isidore Lobnibe **Professor of Anthropology**

LOVE OF LEARNING. Passion. Enthusiasm. World-class scholar.

These are just a few of the superlatives expressed in support of Dr. Isidore Lobnibe, Professor of Anthropology, as recipient for this year's Mario and Alma Pastega Award for Excellence in Scholarship.

Lobnibe's journey to becoming a respected scholar and excellent teacher began with earning a bachelor's degree in History and French at Cape Coast University, 350 miles from his home in northwest Ghana. He went on to teach high school in northern Ghana, on the border with Burkina Faso, before migrating with his family to the United States for graduate studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Since joining the faculty of WOU in 2007, Lobnibe has ably balanced his role as a teacher and mentor, with that of active scholar; he has served as a peer reviewer for journals worldwide, conducted international field research, presented papers, published numerous articles, and received several distinguished research fellowships. He has a particular interest in the evolution of anthropology as a discipline, engaging with it through a critical lens, from a local and lived experience growing up in rural Ghana, and as a scholar. Lobnibe co-authored the recent book *Imagining Futures: Memory and Belonging in an African Family*, a collaborative study that turned the lens on his own extended family, exploring how active memory-making binds globally dispersed kin.

It is these rich insights and perspectives that Lobnibe shares with students in courses such as *Cultures of Africa* – a survey of Africa's different regions and cultures, and the history that has impacted both over time. In *Transnational Migration*, students examine the experiences and challenges of long-term or permanent migrants, and in *Medical Anthropology* they study healthcare from a cross-cultural perspective. *African Film and Society*, *Religion and Ritual*, and *Women Hold Up Half the Sky* are some of the many courses Lobnibe has taught over the years.

"I tell a lot of stories about Africa and sometimes my personal background," he says. "I try to get my students from Western out of their comfort zone. I integrate a lot of international perspectives into my teaching." With Lobnibe's encouragement, WOU students have studied abroad in Ghana, Korea and Costa Rica, with several returning to publish their senior thesis in *Western's PURE Insight Journal*.

"Initially you meet them in the classes and they are very timid," he says. "But by the junior or senior year, you see them very transformed, and that is the thing that really gets you excited." Lobnibe is grateful for the support of WOU travel grants and faculty development that enable him to combine research with his teaching responsibilities.

"One fascinating thing I discovered once I got here was the flexibility that Western offers in terms of scholarship," he says. "Our teaching load is a bit heavy but there's also a lot of support for faculty research so one is able to marry the two."

To that end, next year Lobnibe will spend his sabbatical at the University of Ghana, Legon, where he's received a University of Freiburg fellowship with the Maria Sibylla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA). He plans to complete a book about how mortuary practices and funeral rites in northwest Ghana have been affected by the region's changing political economy.

2023 Pastega Faculty Award
Excellence in Service
Leigh Graziano
Associate Professor of English



WHEN LEIGH GRAZIANO, Ph.D, Associate Professor, English, and Director, First-Year Writing, received the offer to join the faculty at Western in 2017, she jumped at the opportunity.

“It was exactly the kind of school I have known I have always wanted to work at,” she says. “I knew I would be able to really focus on my students, where things would be very student-centered and where I’d have opportunities to serve my community.”

Graziano has sought opportunities to serve the WOU community at every turn, from Chair of the General Education Committee to President of the Faculty Senate. She has been a member of several search committees, including the current Provost search, and serves as Faculty Advisor to the student-led WOU Freedom Center Advisory Board. She also represents WOU as a member of the statewide Oregon Writing and English Advisory Council.

Not only is Graziano generous with her time, she brings empathy, compassion and humility to the ongoing work of improving the campus community and the larger landscape of education in the state.

“In the broadest sense, service work is part of the landscape of how we get work done at the university,” she says. “But the way I think about service is how we can be agents of change on campus. Service work is how we can advocate for each other and for our students, and collaborate across sectors to solve problems and get work done.”

Graziano’s curricular expertise was central to a recent service appointment as co-chair and WOU’s representative for the state common course numbering subcommittee. The group worked to ensure that the most transferrable general education courses share titles, credits, learning outcomes, and course descriptions to eliminate transfer barriers as students move between institutions.

“It was an opportunity you don’t often get, which is to collaborate with colleagues across the state to work on curriculum. It was challenging, but in spite of the challenges, students were at the center of this labor,” she says. “We really built something that everyone felt like they could get behind and that would do what it was meant to do, which is to help our students.”

Graziano says that one of her most difficult appointments was as Faculty Senate President during pandemic-necessitated budget cuts that saw the closure of several programs, and the loss of faculty and staff.

“In spite of how obviously challenging that was, I tried to look for ways to use the position to do things that my colleagues needed,” she says. “I advocated for more conversation, for more collaboration, and for more input from faculty before decisions were made. It was an emotionally fraught period and so I tried to remain a source of balance, calm and empathy as we went through this terrible time together.”

Graziano is currently serving as secretary of the Faculty Union and is looking forward to continuing her service next year. “I’m excited. I think it’s an opportunity to build a really new relationship between faculty and administration, and to look at how we can collaborate to support each other and solve problems.”



2022 Pastega Faculty Award
Excellence in Teaching
Erin Baumgartner



2022 Pastega Faculty Award
for Excellence in Scholarship
Gareth Hopkins



2022 Pastega Faculty Award
for Excellence in Service
Breeann Flesch

Baumgartner, whose background is in marine biology, specifically fish behavior, says that her mother often jokes that she declared her major in kindergarten – such was her love of fish, beginning with the freshwater fishes of Kansas, where she grew up. But it was an unsatisfactory experience in her first college-level biology class that has had a lasting impact on her teaching.

“I was sitting there, being lectured at, getting factoids, and all the joy was being sucked out of it,” she recalls. “I remember thinking, I thought I liked biology, but I guess I don’t. I regularly take that memory with me into every class I teach. Because if my students feel that way, then I’m doing something wrong.”

Hopkins, an ecologist whose scholarly work centers on understanding how organisms are affected by and respond to environmental change, is perhaps best known internationally for bringing a multi-disciplinary and evolutionary perspective to conservation issues. His prolific research activities include the publication of 30 peer reviewed papers and, with his students, presenting work at 20 national and international conferences. Since arriving on campus in 2018, Hopkins has mentored 25 undergraduate research students. “Getting undergraduate students involved in research can be completely transformational,” says Hopkins.

“We have students focused on acorns, tree physiology, birds, amphibians, reptiles and insects, all working together in a cross-disciplinary way with the overarching theme of how we conserve ecosystems and the organisms that live in them.”

As a mathematician and computer scientist, Flesch is trained to question assumptions. And as a voice for change on the Western campus and in the local community, she’s using those skills to serve the greater good. “Questioning assumptions means something very specific in a mathematics or computer science sense,” says Flesch. “But if you take that to the realm of systemic change, it means that you don’t rest on your laurels. If it’s always been done a certain way, what are the underlying assumptions? And doing something because it’s always been done that way has certainly not served large groups of folks of varying identities.”

Flesch says her sense of urgency around systemic change has been influenced in part by the experience of being an underrepresented gender in a STEM field. It’s this approach that Flesch brought to general education reform at Western.



2021 Pastega Faculty Award
for Excellence in Teaching

Jaime Cloud

Cloud is known for bringing her innovative and engaging approach to every classroom she graces, whether the forum is virtual or in real life. Students find her lecture notes, often punctuated by trendy memes and silly sound effects, hold their attention better than more traditional sessions. Her methods earn her high praise from students struggling with complex concepts, such as research statistics.

“Recording lectures is one of my least favorite things to do. I absolutely hate it because I am such a perfectionist,” she said. “But since I realized I can make this fun for me, too, by searching the internet for the perfect meme or the best sound effect to illustrate the point I’m making—and knowing that every time I goof, that’s a blooper cut I can put at the end of the video—that takes so much of the edge off.” Cloud’s tactics in classes such as evolutionary psychology, research methods and social psychology may be a little unorthodox, but they get the job done.



2021 Pastega Faculty Award
for Excellence in Scholarship

Cornelia Paraskevas

Paraskevas has had multiple books published and has contributed greatly to research in her area of expertise. But in talking to the linguistics and writing specialist, it quickly becomes clear that her 30-plus years at WOU have been equally about being a consumer of scholarship as much as being a producer of it. “I still remain very curious,” she says. “I’ve constantly asked a lot of questions, and I’ve been very fortunate that, when I am brave and ask questions, people are happy to have an exchange. That has helped me a lot.”

When she got arrived at WOU with a doctorate in theoretical linguistics, she found that that academic focus didn’t match what students needed to learn in order to become English teachers; most of her students were Teacher Education majors. So, she had to figure out “How do I make myself useful to my students?”



2021 Pastega Faculty Award
for Excellence in Service

Melanie Landon-Hays

Landon-Hays has been told she does too much service on campus, that her many hours spent each week doing committee work are beyond one person’s responsibilities. Landon-Hays, a professor in the College of Education, isn’t having it.

“[I’ve thought about] whether I liked what I was doing and if it gave me joy,” the Idaho native said. “And it did. I really like getting outside of my own division. I like meeting people across campus. I like conversations about the big picture, you know, and so service allows me to do that.”

When pressed, Landon-Hays can list many of the committees she serves on and important roles she plays on campus. She’s on the executive council of the (faculty) union and a faculty senate executive, posts that blossom into obligations on multiple other committees.



2020 Pastega Faculty Award
for Excellence in Teaching
Kenneth Carano



2020 Pastega Faculty Award
for Excellence in Scholarship
Kristin Latham-Scott



2020 Pastega Faculty Award
for Excellence in Service
Cindy Ryan

Associate Professor Kenneth Carano aspires to use his knowledge and status to listen and learn from others' voices. "Using my white male privilege to be a co-conspirator in working towards giving less-privileged voices a chance to be heard is a critical part of my field's scholarship. And it's important to me," he said.

Carano has authored and co-authored one textbook, nine book chapters, 15 international and national refereed journal articles, eight regional journal articles, and two book reviews. The focus of his research is technology, global education and social studies best practices. Specifically, he has been at the forefront of presenting research and ideas for pedagogical best practices, global citizenship and social media.

WOU Biology Professor Kristin Latham-Scott hopes she engages her students with mind-expanding topics while also providing them the skills to tackle the challenges. Her dedication, creativity and enthusiasm to create student-centered learning spaces has earned Latham-Scott this year's Mario and Alma Pastega Award for Excellence in Teaching.

"I hope my students take with them the knowledge that they can work through tough questions and generate solutions, and they will have those problem-solving skills for life," Latham-Scott said. Thrilled and honored to receive the award, Latham-Scott credits her consistently improving teaching skills to being motivated by a wonderful group of colleagues and friends who are also dedicated to exceptional teaching and education.

Dr. Cindy Ryan encourages her students in the Early Childhood Studies programs to be social justice warriors. "I tell them I really believe they can do great things, whether it's causing ripples in ponds or waves in oceans," Ryan said. "Everyone has the ability to change the world somehow."

Known for believing teaching and service are intertwined, Ryan is the 2020 recipient of the Mario and Alma Pastega Award for Excellence in Service. Ryan has served as the program coordinator and adviser to students in Western Oregon University's Early Childhood Studies program since 2011. She tells her students she expects them to be co-teachers, where they will all take a journey to learn about research-based best practices in early childhood, inclusion and social justice.



Mario & Alma Pastega

Beginning in 1985, three awards for scholarship, teaching and staff excellence were created

through generous annual gifts from Mario Pastega (1916-2012), an Oregon soft drink bottler and one the state's leading philanthropists and benefactors of education, serving as a trustee on the foundation boards of both Oregon State University and Western Oregon University. In 2020, a new faculty award was created, for excellence in service, honoring a full-time faculty member who demonstrates exceptional service to the university.

Faculty award recipients are honored at a ceremony in May, during which each recipient makes a presentation about their work. Staff award recipients are traditionally recognized at the Employee Recognition Lunch in June.

Candidates for all Pastega Awards are considered through nominations by colleagues, students and coworkers. The faculty award recipients are selected by a committee comprised of past Pastega recipients and one student appointed by student government. Final selections are subject to approval by the university president.