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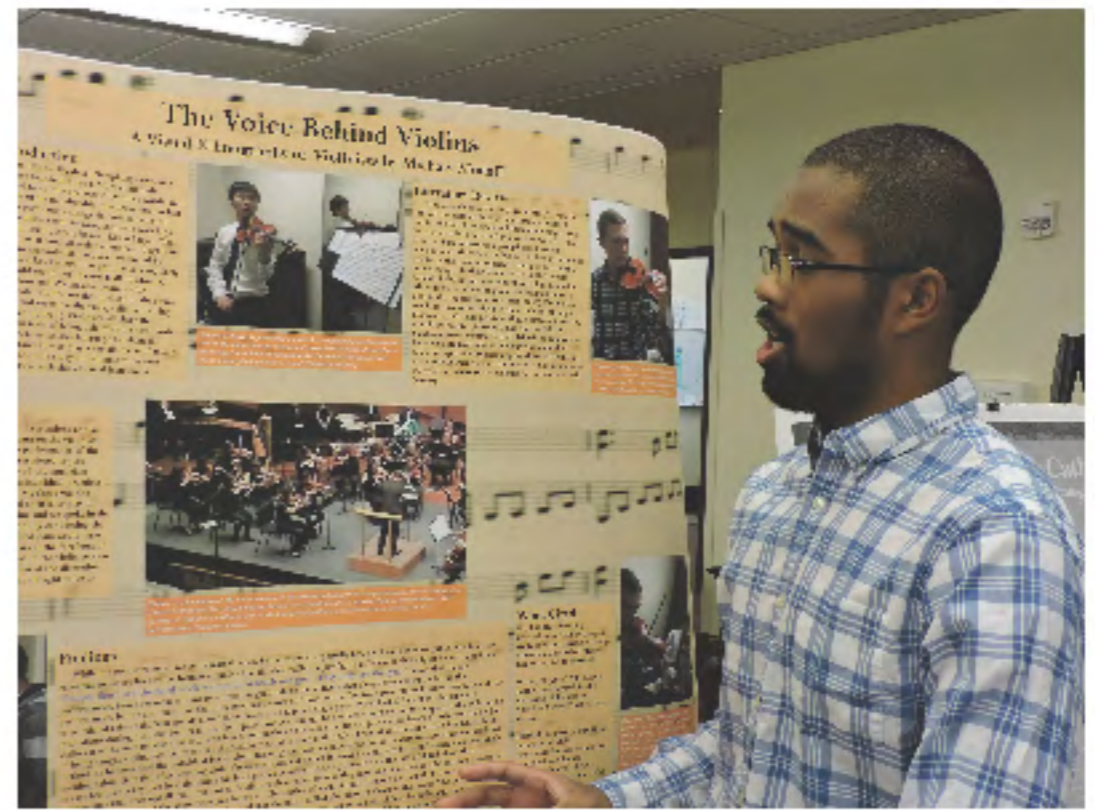
Symposium Caps Course Cluster

Dec. 9, 2016

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan University's Ames Library's main floor buzzed with energy on Dec. 7, as nearly 100 students from nine cluster courses presented their work during a closing symposium and open house.

Some had created colorful posters, drawing faculty and peers to their projects covering topics as diverse as child soldiers in a Ugandan militant group, to a local Autism McLean board member. Others huddled around Chromebooks perched atop the wooden magazine stands, showing visitors their Prezis on African-American women in education. And a group of students in Associate Professor of Political Science Kathleen Montgomery's "Women and Politics" course held court around a TV screen, presenting a visual "State of the Discipline" talk.

Carole Myscofski, director of the Women's and Gender Studies program, said she believes events such as the closing symposium provide an important learning experience for students because the format necessitates a short speech and visual summary of their work.



Michael Modaff '19 immersed himself in the culture of the Illinois Wesleyan Symphony Orchestra violins for his project in the course "Cultural Anthropology."



"Visual Ethnographic Methods" student Tristan Fox '18 (right) worked with Presbyterian minister and writer, Rev. Susan Baller-Shepard, to create a visual metaphor of her life.

"For some students — the Gateway students, for example — this is the first opportunity to create poster presentations, which is a learning process in itself," said Myscofski, who is also the McFee Professor of Religion. An open house format provides relatively low-pressure opportunities for students to reflect on their class or a particular research project, to sum it succinctly with both images and words, and to offer their interpretations orally, according to faculty.

Myscofski said she was very impressed by the students' visual presentations, both on posters and through computerized displays. "The students were well instructed, so credit also goes to the faculty who guided them," she said. "Many of the presentations featured good graphic design, balancing photos or charts with captions or longer text which explained each element, and helped the viewer understand the core ideas in several ways."

"I was also impressed with the sheer variety of approaches to the presentations," she added. "Some students emphasized dramatic photos or charts while providing brief, focused captions, while others offered more textual explanations with images only in supporting roles."

This semester more than 25 courses were associated with the 2016-2017 intellectual theme [Women's Power, Women's Justice](#). Faculty electing to encourage their students to participate in the closing symposium included: Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology/Anthropology Nicole Brown, Assistant Professor of History Amy Coles, Visiting Assistant Professor of Educational Studies Maggie Evans, Professor of Anthropology Rebecca Gearhart Mafazy, Professor of History April Schultz, Visiting Assistant Professor of Psychology Marie Nebel-Schwalm and Montgomery. Chosen by a working group of faculty, staff and students, each year's theme is designed to encourage deep thinking and discussion of its many aspects. Next semester more than [25 events](#) associated with the intellectual theme are planned. Follow the theme on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).