

# Western Reads Annual Report 2012-13

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## About Western Reads

The **Western Reads** program introduces new students to the intellectual communities and conversations of the university, including the variety of perspectives and forms of inquiry provided by the disciplines and the diverse students, faculty and staff that make up the Western experience.

**Western Reads** offers students the opportunity to engage in formal and informal conversation about each year's book choice through a range of activities and events. These include academic courses; interdisciplinary faculty and community-based panel discussions; brown bag forums; supporting guest speakers and presentations; contests and fan events; and exchanges with the author, who generally visits campus to deliver a talk as well as attend forums and meet with classes.

Copies of the book are given to all incoming students during Summerstart, Transitions and quarterly orientation programs.

## 2012-13 Successes:

- Greater visibility for Western Reads by re-designing the website, connecting with social media, and partnering with the Ethics Initiative (Kathy Kitto and Brian Burton) and Village Books (Chuck and Dee Robinson).
- More consistent and thorough assessment at the live events, using iPod surveys (many thanks to Enrollment & Student Services for the mobile technology tools).
- High satisfaction with the fall panels: 86% of respondents felt that the panel presentations met or exceeded their expectations.
- High satisfaction with the author visit: 98% of attendees felt the presentation by Rebecca Skloot met or exceeded their expectations.
- High satisfaction with guest speaker Joy DeGruy: 92% of attendees felt her talk met or exceeded their expectations.
- Increased attendance at Fall panels with approximately 200 attendees at each of two panels
- High profile, catered lunches with guest speakers well attended and received by students, faculty and staff.
- Students, faculty, and staff can now recommend books for the Western Reads Committee through an online form.

## Program or Operational Improvements and Benchmarks:

- Get the upcoming book out to all of the Deans early in Spring quarter and visit the Dean/Chair meetings to introduce the new selection. (Put on the Western Reads calendar by Fall 2013.) Put this reminder on the Western Reads calendar by Fall quarter.

- Reduce the number of speakers on the Fall panels, so each speaker has more time. (The number will change from 4 speakers to 3, beginning Fall 2013.)
- Get an e-mail list of the all of the FIGS and cluster instructors in order to contact them directly about Western Reads programming. (Request this list from Steve Vanderstaay by Fall 2013.)
- Work with the Director of Composition to establish a strong partnership with Western Reads. The incoming Director, Jeremy Cushman, begins Fall 2013, and will be taking over the Composition Program in Fall 2014. I will make contact with him in Fall 2013 and introduce him to Western Reads, soliciting his input and participation in program planning for 2014-15.

### **Goals and Objectives for 2013-14**

- Provide the greatest possible accessibility for students to attend the program events (strategic date selection, on-campus locations, student contests to generate interest, promotion on high traffic student channels, especially social media). We will be utilizing these strategies with all of our programming beginning Fall quarter 2013.
- Generate greater awareness of the program with first year students through a detailed presentation of the new book at Summerstart and Transitions orientations. I will meet with the three faculty members who will be welcoming the Summerstart students to provide them with information about the new book, and I will do the introduction myself at the Transitions orientations. This in-person introduction will complement the introductory letter students receive in the book itself. The idea is to make sure students are informed about the book, to encourage them to read it before school starts, and to generate some excitement for the programming they'll encounter during the school year.
- Target sophomores and upper-classman by promoting the event programming and the book's availability at a discounted rate in the AS Bookstore. This will broaden the focus on Western Reads to include previous Western Reads participants without losing the special bonding of this event for the first year students.
- Build the program to include strong partnerships inside and outside the University. This is getting easier as Western Reads becomes a recognized brand name, and organizations seek us out for collaborations, but it also means keeping an eye out for partners who are likely to be interested in the book's topic and who may be invested in reaching a similar student audience. It will be my responsibility, as Director, to establish these partnerships on a year-by-year basis, where mutually beneficial.
- Continue to increase the visibility of Western Reads on campus and in the community by creating a content rich website with interactive features. We started re-designing the website last year and will continue with Phase II this year. I plan to add a forum for student work produced in connection with the book and Western Reads student contests, such as the film contest we'll be holding this year.

- Promote the book through multiple channels, including WWU print promotions and posters, large banners for public buildings, *The Bellingham Herald*, *The Chuckanut Reader*, *The Western Window*, *Praxis*, *The Western Front*, Facebook, and WWU's Viking Village.