

Faculty Member: Heather Evans

Department: Social Sciences

Title of Project: Framing Immigration on Social Media: How Elite Cues Shape Public Opinion on Immigration

Elite messaging plays a critical role in shaping public debate and opinion about public policies. This project will explore elite political communication on social media, investigating how the tone and framing of immigration messaging by political leaders influence public opinion. Using comprehensive data on all congressional candidates' tweets from 2012 to 2024, we will develop an original database of how candidates frame the immigration debate and the tone they use when discussing immigration. We will then conduct a survey experiment to examine how elite messaging on immigration influences the public's views on immigration policy and immigrants.

Faculty Member: Marcos Medieros

Department: Business and Economics

Title of Project: **Beyond Mortgages: Empowering Students and the Community through Real Estate Private Lending Education and Training**

This project addresses the acute housing shortage in Wise County, Virginia, through a strategic educational intervention in private real estate lending. With local housing prices escalating and new construction stagnating, traditional mortgage solutions have proven insufficient. The proposed initiative introduces a dual-pronged approach: the development of a comprehensive textbook, *Beyond Mortgages: A Comprehensive Guide to Alternative Real Estate Financing and Private Lending*, and the creation of an accessible, online course designed for both UVA Wise students and Wise County residents. These educational resources will cover key financing tools such as build-up constructions loans, fix-and-flip loans, bridge loans, and debt-service coverage ratio loans, with the objective of equipping participants with the skills to become private lending brokers or informed real estate investors.

This community-centered initiative is designed to empower individuals with practical knowledge that enables real estate development and housing expansion, directly impacting regional affordability and economic vitality. Moreover, it forges industry-academic partnerships, facilitating access to real-world investment capital through collaborations with private lending firms. The project exemplifies the role of higher education in addressing systemic regional challenges through interdisciplinary pedagogy and actionable knowledge dissemination. Its outcomes—including course deployment, industry collaborations, and community workshops—are poised to position UVA Wise as a national exemplar of how targeted education can stimulate sustainable economic development in underserved rural areas.

Faculty Member: Christa Moore

Department: Social Sciences

Title of Project: Cultures of Child Protection: Exploring State-Specific and Nationwide Child Welfare Systems

Child welfare systems are densely complex, dynamic, and multi-disciplinary. These interlocked systems populate an organizational ecology that shifts and changes over time. This study seeks to determine the influence of organizational child welfare cultures of protection on the direct services provided to vulnerable families and children in need of localized systems of crisis intervention and community support. In an era wherein human services and child protection practitioners are better educated and more highly trained than ever before in the history of child welfare, child maltreatment rates continue to increase despite targeted intervention efforts. This project explores opportunities to consider systemic barriers with a call for community-focused participatory research involving collaboration concerning challenges within modern-day cultures of child welfare organizations which function within ethics of justice rather than more foundational and relational ethics of care.

Faculty Member: Michael McNulty

Department: Visual and Performing Arts

Title of Project: Shreds and Patches Theater Project

This project is intended to produce a professional caliber, touring children's theater production to present publicly and as school programs to the students of Wise, Lee, Dickenson Counties and/or the City of Norton, extending the understandings and impacts of live theater on a community. The project will offer UVA Wise students the opportunity for Professional/Paid Internships to develop, through a standard production process, an educational, touring theatrical production in a professional context to be performed for the general public and at public schools. Public school students will have the opportunity to experience live theater, based on noted children's literature, in the educational context of their own schools, making the arts a living and meaningful experience that extends beyond the limited, mediated, digital exposure to the arts through screens and devices. The audiences in the schools and general public will associate their experience with UVA Wise as producer, sponsor of the program, and the home to the people and work embodied in the performance. Audiences will also associate their experience with Pro-Art (as the presenter) a non-profit service organization closely associated with and operated out of UVA Wise.

Faculty Member: Peter Ryan

Department: Visual and Performing Arts

**Title of Project: Traditional Fusion: Commissioning and Performing
Appalachian/Classical Fusion Works for Piano Trio**

Though many “fusion” works exist in the classical repertoire, the joining of Appalachian and classical styles remains a relative rarity in the repertoire. This project seeks to bring light to the potential of the Appalachian/classical fusion style in chamber music by commissioning three works from Appalachian-area composers for the standard classical piano trio: piano, violin, and cello. The commissions will instruct the composers (Donald Sorah, Benjamin Dawson, and Martha Redbone) to fuse traditional elements of Appalachian musical idioms with those of classical compositions. These commissioned works will serve to demonstrate both the musical potential of the genre and of the musicians living and working in Appalachia. The new works will be presented in concerts in which they are paired with pieces from the standard piano trio repertoire that also pull from the cultural origins of their composers. To promote these new works, a piano trio comprised of Peter Ryan, piano, Sean Claire, violin, and Dave Eggar, cello will present concerts at a variety of locations within the United States in 2026.

Faculty Member: Ray Stratton

Department: Visual and Performing Arts

Title of Project: Fire, Water and Ink

This is a creative project focus on the creation of a body of sculptural work. This work will concentrate on large mixed media forms reminiscent of an Ancient Greek vase or vessel such as an amphora. The some of the imagery and methods planned for use in creating these forms will reflect traditional Appalachian arts such as quilting and weaving as well as introducing a modern twist of the story telling of Greek vases. This body of work will be my first significant attempt to merge the different media that I am currently engaged in working with both personally and as part of my teaching, specifically papermaking/printmaking and ceramics. This work will also combine the impact of both of my parents on my artwork. My father works in ceramics and while I am not using fabrics, there are quilt-like aspects as well as sewing/stitching showing my mother's influence. My goal for this project is to produce fifteen to twenty mixed media ceramic pieces. Most ranging around three to four foot tall. With other pieces in the one to two foot range.

Faculty Member: Ning Zhou

Department: Business and Economics

Title of Project: From Personality to Performance: Exploring Behavioral Predictors of Remote Audit Success in Appalachia

This project explores the role of personality traits, particularly Machiavellianism, in enhancing audit performance in remote environments. As remote auditing becomes increasingly prevalent due to technological advancements and pandemic-driven shifts, concerns persist regarding audit quality, especially in resource-limited, geographically dispersed regions. Central to effective auditing is professional skepticism, which may be influenced by individual personality characteristics. Drawing on social presence theory and trait activation theory, this study hypothesizes that auditors with higher levels of Machiavellianism, which has traits associated with strategic thinking, emotional detachment, and goal-orientation, may demonstrate enhanced critical evaluation and assertiveness in remote settings, thereby mitigating potential declines in audit quality.

Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research will combine quantitative surveys assessing Machiavellian traits with qualitative interviews of local audit professionals. The survey will be administered to 80-100 auditors to analyze correlations between personality traits and audit quality. Interviews will provide contextual insights into how these traits influence remote audit practices. Findings aim to contribute to academic understanding of human factors in remote auditing and offer practical guidance for talent development, team management, and training in resource-constrained environments. Ultimately, this research seeks to inform industry practices, improve audit quality, and foster regional economic resilience by integrating psychological insights into auditing frameworks.