The core mission of the Center is to foster the integrated study of the North American West with a focus on human/environmental interactions, or the “lands and peoples” of the region. Situated within a public, land-grant institution whose charter is to serve and educate all citizens in the state of Montana, the Center for Western Lands and Peoples is part of an established academic network that conveys research and learning to every county in the state. With its emphasis on developing connections throughout the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts, the Center helps position MSU as an important site for creative scholarship across interdisciplinary fields that are dedicated to advancing knowledge about the land and people of the North American West.

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Photos by Kelly Gorham and Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez, unless otherwise noted.
I am delighted to introduce MSU’s new interdisciplinary center focused on the past, present and future of the North American West. MSU is the ideal location for this new hub for scholarship and public debate on the future of our region due to our faculty’s expertise on the history, culture, ecology, environment, and society of the West; our community networks; and our geographic location at the interface between the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains. This report shows that CWLP is already engaged on a variety of fascinating projects. I hope you will be eager to contribute in every sense towards the success of this exciting new venture.

Sincerely,
Nicol C. Rae
MSU College of Letters & Science Dean
These scholars examine the West as the site of *powerful legends and stories* in their studies of literature and the visual arts.
The Center for Western Lands and Peoples at Montana State University focuses on the natures and cultures of the western United States and Canada. Faculty and students in a variety of fields, including American Studies, Archaeology, Earth Sciences, Ecology, English, Film and Photography, Geography, History, Native American Studies, and Political Science, explore the meaning of place as expressed in a variety of texts and material objects.

These scholars examine the West as the site of powerful legends and stories in their studies of literature and the visual arts. Students and faculty also trace the role the region and its borders have played in the creation and development of national identity. In the process, they study the history of encounters between diverse populations in the West and the ways the region has served as a laboratory for working out relations between native and newcomer groups. The West is understood as a complicated space where different populations have struggled over the land and resources. These complexities have led to the creation of a rich and vibrant world that the Center for Western Lands and Peoples looks forward to exploring.

Efforts to create the Center began in 2013, when MSU College of Letters and Science Dean Nicol Rae established an advisory board for the “Western Lands and Peoples Initiative.” In spring 2016, with the help of a competitive Humanities and Social Science Phase II Award provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and funding from the Office of the MSU President, Director Susan Kollin (English) and Co-Directors Mary Murphy (History) and Robert Rydell (History and American Studies) began organizing a series of events and projects centered on scholarship about the North American West. After receiving approval from the Board of Regents in March 2017, the Center for Western Lands and Peoples was established.

The Center builds on an impressive base of scholarship about the North American West in the College of Letters and Science and at Montana State University more generally. By supporting and advancing student and faculty interdisciplinary research, publication, and scholarship, the Center seeks to establish a research-based resource for the regional, national, and global community.

Demographic studies indicate that the population of the United States is increasingly concentrated in the West, a trend that is likely to continue over the next decades. MSU’s Center for Western Lands and Peoples enables public stakeholders and members of the academic community to gain a deeper understanding of the many social, cultural, political, and economic changes driven by this region. The Center offers a dynamic setting for discussions between the university and the public about issues facing the state and region, while also foregrounding the importance of imagining the North American West from a variety of viewpoints.

As part of a land-grant institution, the scholarly community at MSU has a special responsibility to foster understanding of the local spaces and the larger region in which we live, work, and study. As such, the Center for Western Lands and Peoples helps integrate learning, discovery, and engagement by bringing together students, faculty, and community members who share an interest in the interdisciplinary study and ongoing centrality of the North American West across national and international contexts.
In fall 2016, the Center partnered with the Extreme History Project, an organization based in Bozeman that is dedicated to advancing public history events and making the humanities accessible to a broader audience. In collaboration with the Extreme History Project, Center co-director Mary Murphy received a National Humanities Alliance grant to fund a week-long workshop on “Building Community Through Historic Preservation.” This event brought together students, faculty, and members of the public to explore topics on public history and historic preservation in Bozeman and the surrounding area. The workshop included a public lecture at the Museum of the Rockies presented by Janet Ore, Ph.D., an MSU historian of environmental studies and vernacular architecture; a community discussion of historic preservation in Bozeman; and a hands-on workshop at the Gallatin History Museum.

In collaboration with the MSU Library and the Montana Historical Society, the Center hosted a Digital Humanities Workshop in November 2016. The Digital Humanities is an emerging field of study in universities that explores the interface between the new information sciences and traditional humanistic inquiry. Tammy Troup, the Digital Services Manager from the Montana Historical Society, led an interactive workshop for faculty and graduate students that explored possibilities for developing Digital Humanities projects across various academic disciplines and units.

In spring, the Center for Western Lands and Peoples co-sponsored with the Department of Film and Photography and the Museum of the Rockies a “Double Feature” that showcased two talks on classic Western films. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Glenn Frankel presented a lecture on “High Noon: The Hollywood Blacklist and the Making of an American Classic” on March 30. Emmy Award-winning writer Kirk Ellis gave a lecture on April 4 entitled “The West, the Movies, and Society, or Can Cowboys Really Be Subversive?” As part of their visit to campus, the presenters also offered master classes that enabled undergraduate and graduate students to explore Western film and television in greater detail. Both events were held at the Hager Auditorium at the Museum of the Rockies.

In partnership with the MSU Department of History and Philosophy and the Asian Studies Program, the Center co-sponsored a talk on borders and frontier regions in comparative perspectives by Professor Eric Schluessel from the History Department at the
University of Montana. During his visit to campus in April, Professor Schluessel also held a workshop on “The Middle Ground in the Middle Kingdom” for MSU graduate students.

Along with the History Graduate Student Association, the Center co-sponsored a talk by Richard Brown on “Willson in Wilson: Fred Wilson and Architecture at Montana State College, 1910–1939.” The presentation was held in conjunction with a display in Wilson Hall and an exhibit entitled “Contrast and Context: The Life and Times of Fred F. Willson” at the Emerson Cultural Center on display from February 10 to April 28, 2017.

Together with the Department of English and the College of Letters and Science, the Center hosted Willy Vlautin (pictured), western novelist and member of the Portland-based alternative country band Richmond Fontaine. During his campus visit on March 29, Vlautin gave a talk on “How a Song Becomes a Novel.” He also played music and gave a book signing. Vlautin’s novel, *Lean on Pete*, has been adapted for the screen by director Andrew Haugh and will appear in theaters in late 2017. During his visit, Vlautin also held a master class with a group of English majors and faculty members.

In addition to these events, the Center was also a cosponsor of the Western Literature Association conference, which was held in Big Sky, Montana in September 2016. MSU English professor Linda Karell organized the conference and served as the WLA president for 2016. Likewise, the Center co-sponsored the Michael P. Malone Memorial Conference on “Wild Animals in the Wild West,” organized by Philosophy professor Sara Waller in October 2016.
Fall 2016 saw the continuation of the popular lecture series, “Perspectives on the American West,” which is co-sponsored by the College of Letters and Science. Offering diverse perspectives on issues facing the region, these lectures have often been delivered to standing-room-only audiences at the Hager Auditorium in the Museum of the Rockies.

Professor Mark Fiege, Wallace Stegner Chair in Western American Studies and member of the Department of History and Philosophy at Montana State University, delivered a talk on “A Country Without Illusions: Wallace Stegner in His Time and Ours” on October 3, 2016.

Professor Charles Wilkinson, Distinguished Professor and Moses Laskey Professor of Law, University of Colorado, Boulder, gave a lecture on “Becoming a Westerner: Montana and Other Cherished Formative Experiences” on November 7, 2016.

Maile Meloy, award-winning author of Montana and the American West, gave a reading and talk entitled “Both Ways is the Only Way I Want It” on November 14, 2016.

Professor David Theobald, Senior Scientist with Conservation Science Partners, Fort Collins, Colorado, delivered a presentation on “The Geography of Conservation in the Next Wild West” on December 5, 2016.
We are excited about hosting a fall symposium on Montana writer Ivan Doig, which will be held September 13–16, 2017 on the MSU campus. Entitled “Doig Country: Imagining Montana and the West,” this event, which is co-sponsored with the College of Letters and Science Office of the Dean, the MSU library, the Montana Historical Society, and the Country Bookshelf, will feature presentations by geographers, historians, librarians, poets, and literary scholars from Montana, the West, and Canada.

The MSU Library recently acquired the papers of Ivan Doig, which are housed in the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and are open to the public both at Special Collections and through the digital Ivan Doig Archive. Faculty, students, and community members will spend two days discussing the historical, cultural, and literary contexts of Ivan Doig’s writings and his contributions to our understandings of Montana and the West. The symposium will conclude with an afternoon of events in White Sulphur Springs, where Doig spent much of his childhood.

The keynote address will be delivered by Professor Patricia Limerick, Faculty Director for the Center of the American West at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Rebecca Saletan, Ivan Doig’s former editor and now the Editorial Director of Riverhead Books, will also give a presentation. Other invited speakers include Professors Christine Bold from the University of Guelph, Matthew Fockler from Augustana College, Nancy Cook from the University of Montana at Missoula, and Alan Weltzien from the University of Montana at Western.

Our proximity to America’s first national park has enabled MSU students and faculty to develop innovative scholarly projects. In partnership with the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and the Wallace Stegner Chair in Western American Studies, the Center for Western Lands and Peoples is organizing an upcoming conference on the environmental and economic impacts of recreational activities in southwest Montana. This two-day event to be held in spring 2018 will enable experts from the university, state and federal agencies, and the outdoor industry to discuss how Montana’s growing population can best meet the challenges of the 21st century by developing new sustainability initiatives and stewardship practices for our public lands.

The popular “Perspectives on the American West Speaker Series” will be held again in fall 2017 at the Hager Auditorium at the Museum of the Rockies.

Claire Vaye Watkins, author of the novel Gold Fame Citrus and the short story collection Battleborn, will speak October 2.

Michael Punke, author of The Revenant and former Deputy United States Trade Representative and U.S. Ambassador to the World Trade Organization, will give a talk on October 16.

Professor Rosalyn LaPier, author of Invisible Reality: Storytellers, Storytakers, and the Supernatural World of the Blackfeet and historian in the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of Montana, will present on November 6.

Jeremy Johnston, Hal and Naoma Tate Endowed Chair and Curator of Western American History and Ernest J. Goppert Curator of the Buffalo Bill Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming, will present on November 13.

MSU Professor Andrew Hansen, Director of the Landscape Biodiversity Lab and faculty member from the Department of Ecology, will speak on December 4.
Festival of the West
The spring Festival of the West served as an opportunity to foreground interdisciplinary research at MSU. The Festival featured talks by ten faculty members and posters from nearly a dozen graduate students on their recent research about the American West. The faculty participants represented a range of fields including Ecology, English, Film, Geography, History, Library Science, and Native American Studies.

Mark Fiege, History — “Reimagining Wonderland: National Parks and the Public Lands as Sites of Triumph, Tragedy, and Resistance”

Walter Fleming, Native American Studies — “Indigenous Studies Research and the American West”

Andrew Hansen, Ecology — “Nature and People in Greater Yellowstone: Opportunities and Challenges”

Linda Karell, English — “Haunting and Haunted: Desire Lines in Western Women’s Memoirs”

Gretchen Minton, English — “Shakespeare’s Montana Schoolhouses”

Andrew Nelson, Film and Photography — “Preservation and Specialization in the New Golden Age of the Western”

Cindy Stillwell, Film and Photography — “Landscape Dreams and Visual Essays: A Work in Progress”

Bill Wyckoff, Geography — “Rephotographing Arizona: Exploring Landscape Change with Norman Wallace”

Jan Zauha and Hannah McKelvey, MSU Library — “Beyond the Western: The MSU Library and the Digital American West”

The graduate student poster session included research by Laurel Angell (History), Jeff Bartos (History), Nick Bermann (History), Nancy Mahoney (American Studies), Kelsey Matson (History), Linnea Sando (Earth Sciences), Kristin Smith (Earth Sciences), Anthony Wood (History), Will Wright (History) Micaela Young (American Studies), and Dionne Zoanni (Earth Sciences).

Gokyuzu VI  |  Sara Mast, 2007, encaustic and dry pigment on paper.
Graduate Student Professional Development Workshops

A series of four Professional Development Workshops were offered in fall and spring semesters for graduate students interested in receiving practical skills and advice about professionalization. These workshops offered interactive sessions on grant writing, abstract writing, resume writing, and creating a professional presence online. Featured presenters included Jordan Komoto, the Director for Human Resources at Zoot Enterprises.

Sponsored Awards and Grants

The Center for Western Lands and Peoples offered a dissertation completion award and small competitive research grants to nearly a dozen graduate students working on topics related to the North American West.

Jennifer Woodcock-Medicine Horse (American Studies) received a Dissertation Completion Award for fall 2016.

Graduate Research Grants were awarded to Laurel Angell (History), Jeff Bartos (History), Nick Bergman (History), Jennifer Dunn (History), Nancy Mahoney (American Studies), Kelsey Matson (History), Tonya Robinson (American Studies), Linnea Sando (Earth Sciences), Kristen Smith (Earth Sciences), Will Wright (History), Micaela Young (American Studies), Dione Zoanni (Earth Sciences).

The Center for Western Lands and Peoples also offered small competitive research grants to faculty members working on topics related to the North American West.

Professor Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, History, received an award for her research on “Imperial Zions: Mormonism and the Politics of Domesticity in the Nineteenth Century.”

Professor Gretchen Minton, English, received research funds for her project on “Shakespeare in Montana”

Professor Robert Petrone, English, received an award for his proposal entitled “Collaborative Project with a Blackfeet Reservation Alternative High School.”

Professor Bill Wyckoff, Geography, received research funds for his project on “Historical Landscape Change in Arizona.”
Faculty Recognition

Faculty associated with the Center for Western Lands and Peoples have received a number of awards and honors this year.

Professor Robert Rydell, Department of History and the Program in American Studies, received the prestigious Mary C. Turpie Award from the American Studies Association in 2016. The award recognizes outstanding abilities and achievement in teaching, advising and program development in American Studies at a local or regional level.

In fall 2016, Professor Susan Kollin, Department of English, was awarded the Western Literature Association’s Thomas J. Lyon Award for her book, Captivating Westerns, published by the University of Nebraska Press in 2015.

Professor Mary Murphy, Department of History, was honored with the Women’s Faculty Caucus Distinguished Mentor Award for 2016–2017.

In spring 2017 at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, Professor Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, Department of History, received the Best Article Award for her essay, "Mahana, You Naked! Modesty, Sexuality, and Race in the Mormon Pacific." The award is funded by the Hartley Foundation.

Faculty Advisory Board

The Faculty Advisory Board includes members from nine academic units across the MSU campus. It is comprised of an Executive Committee and 12 faculty members who meet each semester to organize and arrange the upcoming activities of the Center.

Executive Committee
Susan Kollin, Chair, English
Mary Murphy, Co-Chair, History
Robert Rydell, Co-Chair, History and American Studies

Faculty Members
Rick Bass, Western Writer-in-Residence, English
Mark Fiege, Wallace Stegner Chair, History and Philosophy
Walter Fleming, Native American Studies
Andrew Hansen, Ecology
Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, History and Philosophy
Linda Karell, English
Paul Lachapelle, Political Science
Andrew Patrick Nelson, Film and Photography
Bill Wyckoff, Earth Science
Cathy Zabinski, Land Resources and Environmental Science
Jan Zauha, MSU Libraries
goals for the Center

Our initiatives and publications are interdisciplinary in scope, as are the undergraduate and graduate student activities and projects the Center sponsors. The Center enables faculty and students to better coordinate and publicize the many scholarly projects that are ongoing at MSU. With the goal of having an independent budget focused on regional studies and a mission that broadly encompasses the humanities, the social sciences, and the environmental sciences from the outset, the Center for Western Lands and Peoples will offer a major advance in promoting cross-disciplinary research, outreach, and teaching endeavors at MSU.

The goal is to establish an endowment for the Center for Western Lands and Peoples that will:

• Create paid internships for undergraduate and graduate students who wish to gain hands-on experiences in field science, public history, museum studies, professional film and photography projects, and the arts more generally.
• Fund the “Perspectives on the American West” Speaker Series, which is held during fall semester at the Museum of the Rockies. Now in its third year, the series features public presentations, often with standing-room-only attendance, by leading western scholars and writers.
• Offer funded research opportunities for faculty and graduate students working on the West.
• Provide opportunities to host scholarly talks and programs about the West.
• Sponsor master classes with visiting writers and scholars as a way of mentoring undergraduate and graduate students in English, Film, Geography, History, Native American Studies, and Political Science on topics related to the North American West.
• Establish a fully funded post-doctoral research position to be housed at the Center, which will enable a visiting scholar to spend one year working on a major research project centered on the North American West. While in residence, the postdoctoral scholar will offer focused research seminars on topics related to the region, mentor graduate students, and present a public lecture on the scholarship completed during the year.
• Provide subventions to faculty and graduate students to help defray the costs associated with publishing scholarly books on the West.
• Organize conferences and symposia that bring together experts from the university and the public sphere to address the concerns and issues facing the region and the state.
• Enable the Center to host readings and book signings by western writers.
• Offer a Western film series in partnership with the Museum of the Rockies, with a presentation and discussion after the screenings to be facilitated by MSU faculty.

For more information or to have your name added to our mailing list, please contact us at westernlandsandpeoples@montana.edu.

To make a gift, please go to www.msuaf.org/give-westernlands.
Kristin Smith, a Ph.D. student in Earth Sciences is researching the socioeconomic impacts of energy development in eastern Montana and western North Dakota.

Thanks to a research grant from CWLP, Kristin spent two months living and researching in the heart of the Bakken oil boom. Her goal is to help energy communities better understand and identify the opportunities and constraints that they face due to boom, bust, and recovery cycles.

Read more about Kristin’s field research this summer at [www.montana.edu/energycommunities/documents/FieldResearchReportKSmith.pdf](http://www.montana.edu/energycommunities/documents/FieldResearchReportKSmith.pdf).

You can support research that makes a difference. Give to the Center for Western Lands & People. [msuaf.org/give-westernlands](http://msuaf.org/give-westernlands)

Studying the seesaw of Boom and Bust
Cutting Oats on Mill Farm, owned by Louis Josephsen, Ridgeland, Dawson County, Montana
No photographer, date circa 1900. Photo courtesy of Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, MSU Libraries.