

Speaking of Kansas

Washburn Center for Kansas Studies



Kansas Studies Newsletter

Fall 2020

Kansas Studies Courses, Spring Semester 2021

- KS199 A *KS and US: State & Local Government*** MWF
10-10:50 HC 112 Grant Armstrong
- KS199 B *Kansas Literature*** MWF 12-12:50 HC 021 Eric
McHenry
- KS199 VA *KS and US: State & Local Government***
online Grant Armstrong
- KS395 *Independent Study***
- KS397 *Internship in Kansas Studies***
- KS399 *Kansas History*** TR 11-12:15 HC 208 Bruce Mactavish
- KS399 *Environmental Archaeology*** TR 11-12:15 MO
155 Laura Murphy

Kansas Studies Courses, Summer 2021

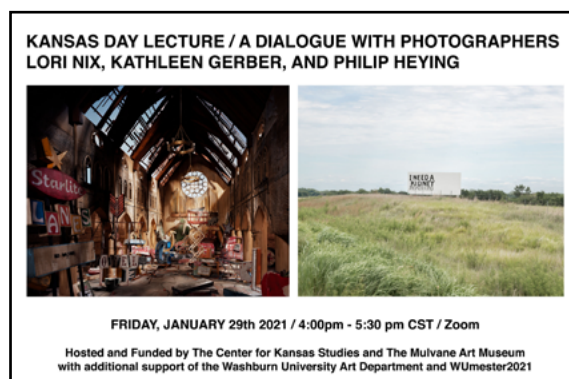
- KS399 VA *Literature of the American West*** online

Kansas Day Lecture 2021: a Zoom Celebration

An Interview with Photographers

On **January 29th**, the Center for Kansas Studies will host its annual **Kansas Day Lecture** virtually over Zoom. Photographers Lori Nix, Kathleen Gerber, and Philip Heying will present their photographic work and participate in a panel discussing their work as well as common threads and concerns within their artistic practices.

Lori Nix and **Kathleen Gerber** are Brooklyn-based artists who create elaborate dioramas and miniatures captured in photographs which depict a future in which manmade environments have been emptied of human inhabitants and reclaimed by nature. Nix, who grew up in western Kansas, channels a fascination with natural disasters she experienced as a child. Their collaborative work is included in major collections such as The Smithsonian *Continued on p. 2* ▶



- Vanessa Steinroetter/
Danielle Head, Co-Directors
cks@washburn.edu
- Deborah Altus, Human Services
Tom Averill, English
Jennifer Ball, VP, Academic Affairs
Bob Beatty, Political Science
Roy Bird, KHC Speaker
Chris Bowers, Military Student Success
Marcia Cebulka, Playwright
Jeannie Chinn, KSHS
Stacy Conner, Human Services
Virgil Dean, KSHS
Kelly Erby, History
Dennis Etzel, Jr., English
Connie Gibbons, Mulvane Art Museum
William Gilliland, Geology
Rachel Goossen, History
Chris Hamilton, Political Science
Jonathan Hart, History
Bob Hoard, Sociology/Anthropology
Lindsey Ibanez, Sociology
Jim Kelly, KTWU
Robert Hull, Finance
David Kendall, Film Producer
Louise Krug, English
Gabrielle Lunte, Modern Languages
Bruce Mactavish, History
Judith McConnell-Farmer, Education
Eric McHenry, English
Debra Mikulka, KAN TRAIN Grant Mgmt.
Jason Miller, Anthropology
Linsey Modellmog, Political Science
Laura Murphy, Anthropology
Marguerite Perret, Art
Mark Peterson, Political Science
Leslie Reynard, Communications
Betsy Roe, TSCPL
Tom Schmiedeler, Geography
Robin Shrimplin, History
Bradley Siebert, English
Sarah Smarsh, Author
Laura Stephenson, Dean, CAS
Margaret Stewart, English
Kelly Watt, Art
David Winchester, Mabee Library
Kerry Wynn, History
Carol Yoho, Graphic Artist


Center for Kansas Studies
www.washburn.edu/cks

Art Museum, Washington D.C., The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston TX, and the Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence KS. The duo has also illustrated stories for numerous magazines including *The New Yorker*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Time Magazine*, *O Magazine*, *Wired*, and *New York Magazine*.

Philip Heying is a photographer living in Matfield Green, Kansas, born in 1959 in Kansas City, MO. During his college days in Lawrence, he was introduced to William S. Burroughs and embarked on a friendship which lasted until Burroughs's death in 1997. Burroughs showed him how art could effect real change, how it could influence human perception and cultural patterns. He recently completed work on *A Visual Archaeology of the Anthropocene from Eastern Kansas to the High Plains*, a project addressing the extraordinary power and consequences of human influence on the ecology of his home region. His work is included in major collections such as The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, MO and the Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence KS.

Event Information: Kansas Day Lecture: A Dialogue with Photographers Lori Nix, Kathleen Gerber, and Philip Heying, Friday, Jan 29, 2021 04:00 PM – 5:30 PM Central Time.

To **sign up for this free event**, visit the CKS Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/KansasStudies>

This event is hosted and funded by **The Center for Kansas Studies** and **The Mulvane Art Museum** with additional support of the **Washburn University Art Department** and **WUmaster2021**. 

below-right, two photos by **Philip Heying**




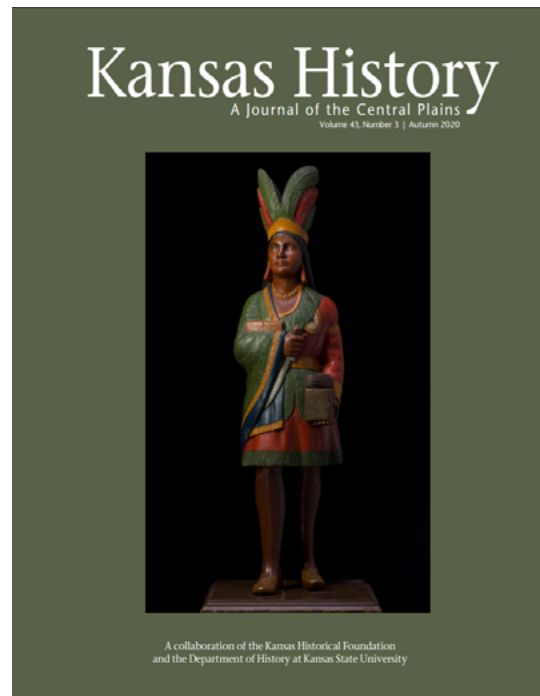
above, two photos by **Lori Nix**

CKS Strengthens Connections with Journal *Kansas History* through Co-Sponsorship

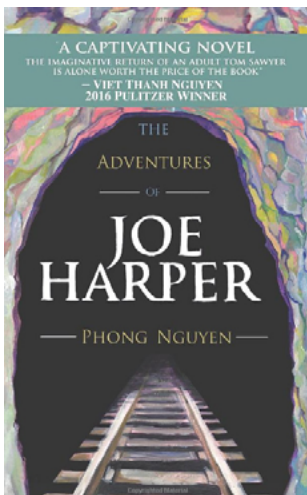
In fall 2020, the CKS Fellows voted unanimously to support the peer-reviewed, scholarly journal ***Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*** (<https://www.k-state.edu/history/kansas-history/>) through a co-sponsorship in partnership with other interdisciplinary centers in the region. This financial support builds on existing connections between the journal and the CKS and deepens our collaboration. CKS Fellow **Kelly Erby**, for instance, serves as the Book Review Editor for *Kansas History*, and **Vanessa Steinroetter** is a member of the journal's editorial advisory board. In addition, several CKS Fellows have published articles and reviews in *Kansas History*, including, for instance, **Tom Averill's** article on the Thomas Fox Averill Kansas Studies Collection in the Autumn 2020 issue of the journal.

The CKS's co-sponsorship shows our support of this important journal and provides a valuable link between Washburn University, the CKS, and the leading scholarly journal on Kansas history. In addition, our continued connections to the journal create opportunities for WU students to work with the editorial staff of *Kansas History* on possible future projects, such as internships and research projects. It also allows us to advertise the CKS in each issue published during the proposed year of co-sponsorship. The journal's **Managing Editor, Dr. Kristen Epps**, has also signaled interest in proposals for collaboration with individual in-

structors teaching classes in Kansas Studies at WU and CKS Fellows who might have an idea for submitting outstanding student work from a class or a research project on a relevant topic for consideration in the journal. The format of such collaborations would, of course, need to be discussed well in advance with Dr. Epps and would need to meet editorial standards before being accepted for publication. 



Phong Nguyen Wins 2020 Jan Garton Prairie Heritage Book Award



The \$1000 prize, for books that help us rethink the heritage of the prairie states, was awarded for Phong Nguyen's ***The Adventures of Joe Harper***, available at <http://thevollandstore.com/phong-nguyen/> —This book review was written and shared by CKS Fellow **Margy Stewart**, for **Prairie Heritage, Inc.**

“As the two boys walked sorrowing along, they made a new compact to stand by each other and be brothers and never separate till death relieved them of their troubles. Then they began to lay their plans. Joe was for being a hermit, and living on crusts in a remote cave, and dying, some time, of cold and want and grief; but after listening to Tom, he conceded that there were some conspicuous advantages about a life of crime, and so he consented to be a pirate.”

—Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

That passage from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is the epigraph for Phong Nguyen's prize-winning novel, ***The Adventures of Joe Harper***. At a virtual book-talk sponsored by the Volland Store on December 10, the author said that those particular words were what led *Continued on p. 4* ▶

Continued from p. 3 ▶

him to choose Joe Harper as his central character and narrator.

The Adventures of Joe Harper had just won the **Jan Garton Prairie Heritage Book Award**, and the on-line event was held to honor the occasion. The award is a \$1000 prize periodically given for works that illuminate in new ways the heritage of the prairie states.

In Phong Nguyen's novel, Tom and Joe grow up to become pirates for real.

The story opens as a guilt-ridden Joe returns alone to Missouri, unable to forget the people he has robbed and hurt while roaming the high seas. Now he goes back to Plan A, wanting once more to find a cave in which to live as a hermit and suffer for his sins.

His quest leads him to join the sub-culture of individuals riding the rails in post-Civil-War America. His mentor in the hobo-life is Lee, a Chinese-American and former railroad worker who is trying to get back to California. Accompanying the two on the journey west is Ruth, an Amish runaway bride, disguised as a man. In one place after another, the three encounter various aspects of society--the haves and the have-nots, the exploited and the exploiters, the kind and the cruel.

Kansas readers will be particularly interested in Joe's experiences in a tavern in Kansas City, a brothel in Topeka, and a drug den in Salina.

Along the way we learn what eventually happened to Huck Finn, and, as California nears, we encounter Tom Sawyer once again. Tom is no longer a pirate; he is now a US marshal. But he is still robbing and killing—just now from behind a badge.

Tom ends up as a politician. When asked about relevance to today's political situation, the author replied that Tom Sawyer is the original "gas-lighter." He has a gift for getting people to disregard the reality they can see with their own eyes and believe instead the counter-factual accounts which he proclaims as truth. The results can be humorous—but also devastating. As Joe says, "For relying on Tom Sawyer, I was sentenced to wander, carry-


ing with me more guilt and grief than a mortal man can stand."

The author said that what most surprised him in his research for the novel was Mark Twain's advocacy for Chinese immigrants. As a young reporter in San Francisco, Twain wrote about mob attacks on Chinese laborers and police complicity in the racist violence. When his editor at the *Morning Call* ordered him to stop writing about such topics, Twain refused—and paid for his stand by losing his job.

The anti-immigrant violence that Mark Twain exposed plays a prominent role in Nguyen's novel. Lee had left California to escape a racist mob, and five years later, when he returns to California, he faces a racist mob again. Indeed, violently enforced white supremacy permeates the novel's milieu. All the main characters—Lee, Joe, Ruth, and Tom—must confront the force of racism. They must decide how to survive it, how to escape its worst effects, whether or not to deploy it for their own advantage, whether to defend each other from it. In the surprising conclusion, all four respond in ways influenced not only by cultural forces but by their individual minds and hearts.

This book can be profitably read on its own, without knowledge of Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn. But as an homage to Mark Twain, the novel has a double impact. It channels the sense of humor of two authors, not just one—and it tag-teams Mark Twain's writing in its exposure of injustice.

To read *The Adventures of Joe Harper* is to be amused and chastened and inspired—and forced to rethink what we know about our culture. There is a vivacious continuity, a thought-provoking resonance, between Mark Twain's creations and Phong Nguyen's.

We the readers are the beneficiaries! 

A recording of the virtual book talk by Phong Nguyen can be found at <https://thevollandstore.com/phong-nguyen/>



Phong Nguyen, author

Launching a Book During the Time of COVID

—This article was written by CKS Fellow **Marcia Cebulska**, author of *Watching Men Dance*, the playwright's first novel

Dates were set. Plans were made. Then, like so many events in the last months, everything had to be re-thought, re-configured, and made safe. My novel, ***Watching Men Dance***, had been scheduled to be launched at the Rita Blitt Gallery on Washburn's campus on September 24, with a live audience and yummy snacks. Then the plague hit with a vengeance. My publisher and I decided on a safe and sane Zoom event, but we also wanted it to be entertaining and hopeful. We wanted it to be a lively literary distraction.

We added a slide show of three research locations: Spello, Italy; Crete; and the Pacific Northwest. The last choice provided an excuse to include Native American drumming I recorded at a powwow in Portland way back in 1970. And looking for music from Crete put me in touch with a terrific traditional lyra player. From Spello, I chose photos from an infiorata included in my protagonist's travels at which residents create paintings on the ground made from flower petals and herbs. Curious people can see the 5-minute segment on background research on YouTube: (18) Three Peeks Into Background Research - YouTube

People from 22 states and two countries attended the book launch. College roommates, long-lost relatives and dear cousins tuned in, as well as faithful fans from three decades of writing for the stage and screen. Although I missed the live contact and book signing, I was delighted that so many people Zoomed in. During the event, Thea Rademacher, my editor at Flint Hills Publishing, peppered me with questions. I, in turn, chatted with Topeka artist Barbara Waterman-Peters who had created the paintings incorporated into the cover design. I read excerpts and audience members asked questions. Fortunately, the entire event was recorded. (See YouTube) (18) Marcia Cebulska - YouTube

Watching Men Dance is a peripatetic novel that travels from Chile to Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, Greece, Italy, Wales, and many places in between. But its heart and home are in Kansas. The center of the book is located in Big Springs, Lawrence, and Topeka, with an excursion West to Quivira and Cheyenne Bottoms. The protagonist is a woman who struggles between her pull to adventure and her need for home and family. She is, in part, a female Odysseus, experiencing trials and joys on her way home to the Makah Indian she met dancing on the streets of Seattle. More information is available on my website www.cebulskawrites.com Reader reviews are accessible on: Amazon.com: Customer reviews: *Watching Men Dance*



When the last draft of *Watching Men Dance* was in final edits, I added this paragraph to the acknowledgements:

“I find myself writing these acknowledgements in the pandemic era of sheltering at home and social distancing, when it is hard to even imagine hitting the road again. Yet it is the travelers and the wanderers I am thinking of, those who wish to engage with the stranger, to learn from difference, and to see the world. I thank you all for reading my book. I hope that the travels within these covers will help relieve the ache of wanderlust and keep you content under your very own covers for now. Be patient. Soon, we will be on the road again.”



WUmester




SUSTAINABILITY

The Center for Kansas Studies looks forward to participating again this spring in Washburn's **WUmester**, an initiative that seeks to engage the entire WU community in a cross-disciplinary learning experience on timely subjects and helping students see the connections between the subjects they study in the classroom and real-world debates and problems. This year's topic is Sustainability.

Our annual **Kansas Day lecture** will provide the official kickoff to this year's WUmester on **Friday, Jan. 29, 2021 / 4-5:30 pm CST via Zoom**. Read details on pp. 1-2 in this CKS Newsletter.

Additional WUmester events that will focus on Kansas include the following:

- **Feb. 10 @ 12 PM: Approaches and Arguments for Sustainable Practices: A Panel Discussion.** Panelists include Dr. Kellis Bayless (WU Biology Department), Leilani Gray (Program Assistant at the Climate + Energy Project and representative of the City of Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board), Zack Pistora (Legislative Director and Lobbyist for the Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club), and Dr. Ian Smith (WU Philosophy and Religious Studies Department).
- **April 1** – Panel discussion featuring **Environment Missouri** and **local transit**
- **April 10, 17, 24, & May 1** – Explore the **Downtown Topeka Farmers Market**
- **April 22** – **Earth Day commemoration** at the Mulvane Art Museum

Additional public events, RT installations at the Mulvane Art Museum featuring the work of local artists, and personal sustainability challenges will be announced at <https://washburn.edu/academics/WUmester/> 

CKS Meeting Summaries

September 4, 2020, Zoom Meeting

- I. **Meeting called to order** at 2:02 PM. Co-directors Steinroetter and Head welcomed the CKS Fellows in attendance and discussed some of the disruptions to CKS programming caused by the pandemic. We are grateful to the VPAA for keeping our budget the same, so we can work within same amounts as in previous years in spite of Covid-19.
- II. **Updates** from CKS Fellows:
 - o **Marcia Cebulska** – Visited family in CA and is working on editing her novel *Watching Men Dance*. The book launch is set for Sept 24th at 7:30 PM over Zoom. Author website has information: <https://www.cebulskawrites.com/>
 - o **Jason Miller** – Assistant Professor of Anthropology and newest CKS Fellow. Served as coordinator and consultant for the Hostile Terrain 94 exhibition at Mulvane. Interest in immigration and community-based research. Hosted virtual meeting with Kansas Poet Laureate on Washburn Facebook Page. Secured funding for live translation into Spanish for events in Sept. to support exhibition. Thanked the CKS for money to buy iPads for a digital story- *Continued on p. 7* ▶

CKS Meeting Summaries —cont.

September 4, 2020 -continued from p. 6

- telling project – paused due to Covid moving work online.
- o **Tom Averill** – Working with CKS collection at Mabee Library, Kansas Book Award this year, literary non-fiction, guidelines online. Wrote article for *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* in spring about the CKS collection. Working with Topeka and Shawnee County public library, benefiting from some of their deacquisitions.
 - o **Laura Murphy** – Last semester CKS contributed funds to bring Chip Colwell to give a talk on campus, which was attended by about 50 participants, on Feb 13th. Inspired students to write book review about his book, and had it published in *Kansas Anthropologist* (Taylor Nickel). Did not get to use second part of funding because Kansas Archaeology day was cancelled, although work was still presented online. Next semester, Murphy will be teaching Environmental Archaeology as a CKS cross-listed class, bringing in curriculum from Kansas Geology as well. There will also be tie-ins with the WU-mester theme “Sustainability” and a joint panel online between Washburn and Environment MO.
 - o **Will Gilliland** – Took specimens to display at Gem and Mineral Show in KSC, will have show next spring. Cave crystals in the 1900s. Jr. Rock Hounds, on hold, and 4H geology project on hold, wrote self-guided field trips for kids and families to do outdoor activities published in *The Drifter* Newsletter.
 - o **Eric McHenry** – Teaching ENB138/KS199 Kansas Literature in the spring with discussion of Kansas poetry; interested in ideas for generating more interest in class from students. Had authors visit classes. Students can get Humanities Gen Ed Credit, or take it as a class outside their major under KS 199. Exploring the history of “The Bottoms” area of Topeka.
 - o **Deborah Altus** – Plans for research got derailed, having to work with interns and practicum students, no longer chair – looking forward to IRB approval to start study at first senior co-op housing program. Considering project to look at opioid epidemic in Kansas with Stacy Conner.
 - o **Carol Yoho** – Trying to bring Buster Keaton celebration back to Kansas, but the plans have been postponed for a year. Kansas Authors Club convention virtual convention, assisting Zoom hosting. Next Oct. Topeka will hold convention. Theme is “Writing Through Difficulties.”
 - o **Rachel Goossen** – Oral history interviews with Mennonites in LGBTQ+ community, national project. Article “Repent of the Sins of Homophobia: Rise of Mennonite Leaders” is at press in the journal *Nova Religio*. Worked with an archivist of Mennonite church archives in Indiana. Working with Religious Archives Networks to put profiles on the web. Goossen is also coordinating the 2021 History Day Competition.
 - o **Martha Imperato** – Worked with **Tom Averill** on CKS collection, need more room for collection. Recommended book about the Bottoms in Mabee Library in response to Eric McHenry’s earlier remarks: https://encore.topekalibraries.info/iii/encore/record/C__Rb1955536__Sthe%20bottoms__Orighresult_X7;jsessionid=9A211FFD7EAE861CA55BDC1438A601E3;jsessionid=C8B649AAEDE4E67B364EC0931436D5C4?lang=eng
This is a copy that can be checked out at Mabee. The library had to remove oversized books from shelves to make room for classroom. All Kansas books are available next door to Martha’s office. The Green Books for travelers are online, and it’s interesting to see how many recommended places for food, drink, lodging, etc., in Topeka and Lawrence are in the Bottoms—pretty much all of them!
 - o **Ramon Powers** – Book *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art*, co-authored with Denise Low, will be coming out from University of Nebraska. Participated in Kansas Oral history project, interviewing former legislators.
 - o **Connie Gibbons** – New exhibition at the Mulvane: *Hostile Terrain*. Oscar Medina accessible on Website/social media. On exhibit drawings by Robert Alt used to illustrate book *Contours of the Mind* presented with two Elizabeth Layton drawings and video. *I Dream A World* on Exhibit for rest of year.
 - o **Vanessa Steinroetter** – On Sabbatical in spring; as part of her research, she identified a new narrative about irregular warfare on MO/KS border, an autobiography about being held captive, written by Thomas Goodman.

Continued on p. 8 ▶

CKS Meeting Summaries —cont.

September 4, 2020 -continued from p. 7

- o **Danielle Head** – Went on Art Department trip with students to Chicago; received tenure and promotion in the Spring. Currently working on a new Project with some rural travel aspects. Did some editorial photographic work for *New Territory Magazine* photographing Woodland Park (now Brook Creek Park) for an article about Langston Hughes in Lawrence.

III. Funding Requests

- a. **Tom Averill** – Spring \$500.00 Vote for 10th Anniversary Kansas Book Festival. Approved.
- b. **Carol Yoho** – Kansas Authors Club earmark \$200 – 300 contribution. Approved.

IV. **Reminder** to send suggestions for virtual guest speakers for the Fall 2020 semester to the co-directors.

V. **Request** to please advertise CKS classes being offered in the spring 2021.

VI. **Meeting adjourned** at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by **Danielle Head**.

December 18, 2020, Zoom Meeting

I. **Meeting called to order** at 2:00 PM. Co-directors Steinroetter and Head welcomed the CKS Fellows in attendance and discussed the nominations for Kansas Day Speakers for Kansas Day on January 29th. Additionally, discussion of previous speakers, nomination, and selection process was discussed.

II. **Updates** from CKS Fellows:

Updates for CKS Fellows were requested to be either be added at the end of the Zoom meeting or submitted via email for this session to provide ample time for discussion of issues related to the selection of Kansas Day speakers and to review nominations for the upcoming Kansas Day Speaker.

III. **Discussion of Process for Selecting Kansas Day Speakers**

- a. Martha Imparato brought to discussion past speakers for Kansas Day and requested a review of procedures and policies related to the nomination and selection of speakers.
- b. Co-Directors Vanessa Steinroetter and Danielle Head discussed recent selection

process for speakers, and some of the limitations of availability of chosen speakers, and reasons why selections were made when originally selected speakers were unavailable.

c. Discussion was brought to members for suggestions for diversifying the pool of candidates and nominations in the future. One suggestion was made to solicit self-nominations, which might also help to diversify the pool. It was noted that unless CKS partners with other departments or organizations, the KS Day speaker honorarium cannot exceed much more than \$500.

d. Discussion of process for selecting speakers if originally selected speakers were not interested or unavailable. A recommendation was made to select 2-3 alternate choices for future speaker engagements.

As an outcome of this discussion, it was decided that Kansas Day nominations should be made in time for the first CKS Fellows meeting of each fall semester, so that those Fellows attending the meeting can discuss and select the speaker(s) with sufficient time remaining to plan the event.

IV. **Discussion and Voting for Kansas Day Speakers for Spring 2021**

a. Nominations for the Spring 2021 Kansas Day Presentation were reviewed and discussed.

b. Following discussion, Tom Averill moved to nominate Lori Nix and Philip Heying as the speakers for Kansas Day.

c. The group voted to accept the nomination of Lori Nix and Philip Heying for the Kansas Day Speakers on Jan. 29th, 2021 via Zoom.

d. Additional funding for the speakers was also extended by the Mulvane Art Museum and the Washburn University Art Department, as well as support of the program as part of WUmester 2021.

V. **Reminder** to send suggestions for virtual guest speakers for the Fall 2020 semester to the co-directors.

VI. **Request** to please advertise CKS classes being offered in the spring 2021.

VII. **Meeting adjourned** at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by **Danielle Head**.

WASHBURN UNIVERSITY
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Center for Kansas Studies

Speaking of Kansas

Fall 2020



*Mark Your
Calendar!*



Center for Kansas Studies
**ANNUAL
KANSAS DAY
PRESENTATION**

**Friday, Jan. 29, 2021 /
4-5:30 pm CST / Zoom**

To sign up for this free event, visit the CKS Facebook page,
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