

The Advisor

Newsletter of the Educational Studies Program at
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Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Amanda Maher

Dr. Amanda Maher (cohort 6) is a current Assistant Professor at EMU in the History and Philosophy department. When interviewed for the alumni spotlight, we had a far-ranging conversation that included topics on education, globalization, networking, teaching in the time of COVID-19, and the transformative nature of the EDST program.



Dr. Amanda Maher and Dr. Christopher Robbins

Before beginning the program, Dr. Maher lived and worked as an educator abroad in both Australia and central China, both experiences provided her with excellent vantage points for viewing global trends in education. When she left, the United States was in the beginning stages of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) that emphasized standardized testing and high stakes accountability measures for all schools. Amanda recalls that when she was in Australia, she quickly noticed how other countries interacted with educational policies and followed the lead set by the United States. Conversely, when she was in China, she was given more autonomy as a teacher and was able to teach without thinking of a standardized test. Dr. Maher noted that when she had returned to the US after teaching and learning abroad that “NCLB made it so I had almost come back to a different country-it had so impacted the landscape of education.” It is the same critical eye that guides her practice today.

When asked to reflect upon her time in the EDST program, Dr. Maher said that the entire process was one of great growth and transformation. “I’m not the same person I was when I started in so many ways,” she remarked, “I’m more patient and kinder; I’m more empathetic. When you read so many ideas from so many people around the world, it expands your depths of empathy, and there’s also a deep self reflection involved in a critical studies degree. It’s changed the way I think about education, both the act of and the system of.” For students currently in the EDST program who are looking for similar experiences, Dr. Maher has one direct piece of advice, “*Network!* Go to everything! Stay abreast of what’s happening. What are teachers in your state talking about? Make relationships with faculty members. What are they researching? Topics may align in a way that you were not expecting. Get a range of research methods and approaches.” She also noted that relationships between faculty and students are equally rewarding to the faculty members, especially in online learning environments. “You can create community anywhere, and that’s what I strive to do as an educator. I use the time that I would normally spend driving or parking to write notes to my students. It makes the work more meaningful for me, because what serves my students almost always serves me, too. It’s a reciprocal relationship.” Congratulations on your successes, Dr. Maher! They are certainly well deserved.

Dear Dr.

I keep hearing how important it is to have work published during doctoral studies, but where should I start? What are the first steps in getting published?

Dear Not-Yet-Published Author,

Yes! I think it is definitely necessary to publish some pieces that get out there while you are a doctoral student, especially if you want an academic job. If you don't, it's honestly not as critical. The first place to start is to ask yourself how projects and papers from your coursework can become drafts of articles. Also, don't be afraid of contacting a professor, even after a course is finished, and asking them to help you identify a journal they think might be a good fit. Asking professors if there is anything that they are working on where you could be co-author is also a good idea if you really like what they do. Or approaching a professor with a project that you have in mind and asking them if they might be second author. This will allow you to write with them and see how they approach the writing. They can also give you advice as you write the piece together.

Besides these suggestions, I have some recommendations that I feel really magnified my ability to publish. The first is to find other doctoral students, either in this program or who you meet at conferences, and form a writing group together. Every time you write an article together, switch up the order of the authors no matter who did what. It's not "who deserves the credit" each time that you write, it's how do we gain the most social capital as a collective. Start with presenting at a conference together or speaking together at an event if you can. The purpose of a conference is not only to see what others are doing but to carve out some time and space away from our hectic lives to write with colleagues. Go into it with the intent that the real goal of the conference is to write the first draft of your article based on what you present. There have been conferences where I only go to a few sessions, and the rest of the time is writing with my co-authors/presenters.

The second recommendation is part of the "game" that nobody tells you about. If you have a good idea or a good theory or some good evidence, repurpose it for 10 articles. If you pay careful attention, even the "leaders" of the field have only a couple of groundbreaking ideas, they just re-package them. The unstated "rule of the game"/way of navigating the culture of power is to create as much social capital for yourself as you can with as little effort as possible.

This is, of course, if you want to "play the academic game." If not, don't even worry about that. One benefit of being at a teaching college like EMU is that I don't have to really play those games as much. For me, publishing is activist work—I want to generate new ways of thinking about the world with others in ways that transform my practice and can transform others' practice as well. Then I use my published pieces as movement building communication devices. If I meet someone I have a shared vision with, I send them a piece or two that I wrote to communicate "who I am" and where I am coming from. Publishing also helps me meet other people who share my values and helps with being able to write grants. Hope this is helpful and happy writing!

- Dr. Ethan Lowenstein

If you have questions about activism, education, scholarship, or career, please email Jennifer Bennett at jvance@emich.edu for inclusion in a future newsletter.



Hats off to You!

Congratulations to those who have recently completed their dissertation defense!

- Dr. Micala Evans Cochran

And congratulations to the members of the Educational Studies community who presented their work at EMU's Graduate Research Conference!

- Jennifer Bennett
- Jason DeCamillis
- Kimberly Dixson-Ferrell
- Janet Leppala
- Kat Naish

You can check out recordings of all the presentations from the GRC [here](#).

Upcoming Opportunities

The Mid-western Educational Research Association has an open call for proposals for their annual meeting October 13-15, 2021 in Cincinnati, OH. The theme for the event is The Power of Educational Research: Impacting Change. The proposal deadline is May 15, 2021. You can find more information about this opportunity on the [MWERA website](#).

The Michigan Alliance for Environmental & Outdoor Education is holding a conference at EMU on October 1-3, 2021. Breakout and workshop proposals are being accepted through May 1, 2021. Learn more about this opportunity on the [MAEOE event webpage](#).

Community of Scholars

Community of Scholars gatherings have concluded for the 2020-2021 year, and we are looking forward to when we will gather again in the Fall. If you have any feedback or suggestions, we would love to hear from you! You can email your ideas to Sara Muchmore at smuchmo1@emich.edu.

At one of our recent events, in a nod to March is Reading Month, we shared books that have shaped our work, ideas, and lives. Here is a sampling of the books that were discussed. Think of it as a Community of Scholars-approved summer reading list!

- *Radical Possibilities* by Jean Anyon
- *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach
- *Zen and the Art of Writing* by Ray Bradbury
- *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle
- *All About Love* by bell hooks
- *See No Stranger* by Valerie Kaur
- *We Want to Do More Than Survive* by Bettina Love
- *Embarrassment* by Thomas Newkirk
- *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand
- *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser
- *The Developing Mind* by Daniel Siegel
- *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
- *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf
- *Jelly Roll: A Blues* by Kevin Young

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies

The Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies prepares educators from a variety of community organizations (P-12 schools, higher education and other community contexts) to engage in effective research and practice about teaching and learning within complex social, political and economic systems. A key underlying emphasis of the program is a focus on poverty and its specific impact on urban, as well as suburban and rural communities.