

## **Buffalo Humanities Festival Expands, Explores Gender**

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Buffalo, N.Y. – The University at Buffalo (UB) Humanities Institute (HI) presents the second Buffalo Humanities Festival <[buffalohumanities.org](http://buffalohumanities.org)>, an annual celebration of ideas. The Festival takes place from Wednesday, September 23, to Saturday, September 26, at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo History Museum, Burchfield Penney Art Center, and SUNY Buffalo State. The featured speaker, **Jill Lepore**, is America’s most engaging historical writer.

This year’s theme, “**Gender Bender**,” explores the question of whether we are bound by gender. Now featuring four days of presentations, performances, and conversations, the Festival probes gender issues by going beyond the traditional oppositions of male/female and gay/straight. Tackling a controversial subject head-on, the Festival seeks to raise the level of community discourse in Western New York by exploring sex and gender through history, literature, and the arts. And it does so in a setting that is lively and fun.

Erik Seeman, Professor of History at UB and Director of HI, says “the Festival’s mission is to foster dialogue and idea-sharing among the public, scholars, and artists.” According to Libby Otto, Associate Professor of Art History at UB and Executive Director of HI, “We believe that understanding the humanities enriches one’s life and fosters civic engagement.” Each year, the Festival draws on Buffalo’s rich academic and cultural traditions to engage the most pressing questions of our time.

The Festival kicks off on Wednesday, September 23, with an event at the Buffalo History Museum that is **free and open to the public**. Patrick McDevitt, Associate Professor of History at UB, offers a talk on “Do Clothes Make the Man?” McDevitt explores the history of the man’s suit; a pop-up exhibit of men’s fashions accompanies the presentation. Reception at 7:00pm, talk at 7:30.

On Thursday, September 24, the Humanities Festival Book Group is open to all who want to discuss *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* by featured speaker Jill Lepore. Good food and conversation are on the menu at Sweetness 7 Cafe, 301 Parkside Avenue, from 7:30pm to 9:30pm. The discussion is led by Susan Cahn, Professor of History at UB, an expert on gender history. Tickets are \$8 and include hors d’oeuvres and one glass of beer, wine, or a soft drink.

**Jill Lepore** appears on stage at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery on Friday, September 25, at 8:00pm. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for students. Lepore is a history professor at Harvard University and has won some of the most prestigious accolades in the profession. At the same time, her books and *New Yorker* articles crackle with wit and humor, features that have won her a remarkably wide readership. For more on Lepore, go to <<http://scholar.harvard.edu/jlepore/home>>.

At the Albright-Knox, Lepore talks about her bestselling book, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*. The *Wall Street Journal* calls it “lively, surprising, and occasionally salacious,” while NPR says that the book “relates a tale so improbable, so juicy, it’ll have you saying, ‘Merciful Minerva!’”

After the presentation, Lepore takes questions from the audience and is available to sign books, with copies offered for sale by Talking Leaves. A limited number of VIP

tickets are available for a wine-and-cheese reception with the author, beginning at 7:00pm. VIP tickets, which include admission to Saturday's events, are \$60 each, \$100 for two.

The Festival continues on Saturday, September 26, with fifteen interactive talks and performances by Western New York's most gifted humanities teachers and scholars, at the Burchfield Penney Art Center and Ketchum Hall at SUNY Buffalo State. During each of the hour-long sessions, speakers engage audience members on topics such as "The Sex of Sports," "The Real Eunuchs of Constantinople," and "Rebellious Women of Country Music." Performances include Shakespeare in Delaware Park doing scenes from "Twelfth Night," first with all male actors and then all female, and the Niagara University Theatre Department offering their gender-switched adaptation of "Cyrano de Bergerac." Presentations will be held from 11:00am to 4:00pm. A full schedule is at <http://buffalohumanities.org/schedule-of-events/>.

Daypasses for Saturday's events, only \$15 for adults and \$10 for students, also include a screening of short films about gender and **free admission** to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and Burchfield Penney Art Center. And if Daypasses are purchased by Wednesday, September 23, they include a **free lunch** from the West Side Bazaar. Choices include Ethiopian vegetarian combo, Burmese chicken curry, Vegetarian Pad Thai, and many more.

Saturday also features a number of **events that are free and open to the public** outdoors on Rockwell Quad (behind Rockwell Hall, between the Burchfield Penney and Ketchum Hall). A Drag Break during lunch features some of Buffalo's favorite gender-bending performers. The Performance Space includes cabaret music by Katy Miner and

Michael Hake at 2:00pm, and a Gender Bender Party with cash bar and music by Alison Pipitone at 4:00pm. In the Kids Tent, Squeaky Wheel Film and Media Arts Center invites children to play dress up and make video art that explores ideas of what it is to be a “boy” or a “girl.”

The Festival is a collaboration among five Western New York institutions of higher education: in addition to UB, partners include Canisius College, Niagara University, SUNY Buffalo State, and SUNY Fredonia. The Festival is made possible by the generous support of the Oishei Foundation, the UB College of Arts and Sciences, the New York Council for the Humanities, UB’s Office of the Vice President for Research, Merrill Lynch Wealth Management, Schroeder, Braxton & Vogt Financial Advisors, embraceWNY, and WNED/WBFO. The John R. Oishei Foundation strives to be a catalyst for change to enhance economic vitality and quality of life for the Buffalo Niagara region through grantmaking, leadership, and network building.

For more information, including a full schedule of events, and to purchase tickets, go to <[buffalohumanities.org](http://buffalohumanities.org)>.

For questions, contact Erik Seeman, Professor of History at UB and Director of HI, at <[seeman@buffalo.edu](mailto:seeman@buffalo.edu)>.