

# The Cognitive Revolution and A.I.: From the Birth of Cognitive Science to Artificial Intelligence

With Dr. Sten Knutsen, Rutgers University, New Brunswick

**10:30 am - 11:30 am**

Cognitive science is the interdisciplinary study of the mind: drawing on psychology, linguistics, philosophy, neuroscience, and computer science. It began with the “cognitive revolution” of the 1950s, when researchers began to study the mind as an information processor. This shift reshaped how we think about language, memory, and reasoning, and laid the groundwork for artificial intelligence.

In this four-week series, we will trace the history of cognitive science and its interplay with AI. Along the way, we’ll ask: how do humans think and communicate? What can machines really do? And what challenges and opportunities does A.I. present for our future?

**May 8** - *Cognitive Science and the Cognitive Revolution*  
What important events led to the cognitive revolution of the 1950's? What is cognitive science and why is it so revolutionary?

**May 15** - *Cognitive Science and the Study of Mind*  
How psychology and linguistics were transformed, and what they reveal about human thought and communication.

**May 22** - *The Rise of Artificial Intelligence*  
How researchers first tried to build “thinking machines,” why early approaches struggled, and how new methods make today’s A.I. possible.

**May 29** - *Artificial Intelligence Today: Promise, Problems, and Possibilities*

Tools like ChatGPT and image generators are becoming part of daily life. We’ll explore how people are using them, what they can (and can’t) do, and the larger questions they raise about work, education, creativity, and society.

# Investigating Shakespeare II

With Stephen Davis, Associate Professor of Theatre Arts,  
Centenary University

**10:30 am - 11:30 am**

Professor Davis will explore the context (biographical, social/political, and artistic) of two of Shakespeare’s plays, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, both written circa 1606. Past Investigating Shakespeare lecture series have included *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*. Participants attending the lectures are encouraged to view the productions listed (in priority order) and/or read the plays prior to the start of the series.

## **June 5** - *Macbeth* (film discussion)

- RSC Trevor Nunn 1979 production - *Macbeth* - Ian McKellen - Judi Dench
- *Macbeth* (2015) directed by Justin Kurzel
- The NextStage Rep 2023 production, directed by Stephen Davis
- The discussion may also include additional adaptations such as the recent Denzel Washington and Frances McDormand production (*The Tragedy of Macbeth* directed by Joel Coen)

## **June 12** - *King Lear* (film discussion)

- *King Lear* - Laurence Olivier - John Hurt - Brian Cox - Diana Rigg 1983
- *King Lear* - Ian McKellen - 2008
- *King Lear* - James Earl Jones - Paul Sorvino - Raúl Juliá - 1974

**For those who are unable to attend in person, the recorded series will be available to registrants.**

SPRING 2026

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## Developing an American Sound II

### 1927 - 1945

With Dr. Robert W. Butts, Artistic  
Director/Conductor of The Baroque Orchestra of New  
Jersey, Professor Montclair State  
University, Saint Elizabeth University

**10:30 am - 11:30 am**

We continue the series focusing on the history of  
music in America.

#### **March 27** - *1920-1927: Freedom, experimentation, new sounds*

1920 was a decade in which people partied and felt a  
new liberation in attitude, life-style, dress, and music.  
Jazz came of age, film added a soundtrack, country  
music became a popular genre, classical composers  
explored modernism, and radio flourished.

#### **April 10** - *1927-1935: Everything Crashes and Changes*

The last years of the decade saw increased spending on  
the arts, increased interest in a diversity of music styles,  
and an increased success of popular music, the early  
years of the 1930s were marked by the Great Depression  
which changed life and the arts which moved in new  
directions to reach new audiences.

#### **April 17** - *1935-1940: Swing and Big Band*

This dominated the music world, concert composers  
adopted a more popular approach to new music, films  
added newly composed orchestral soundtracks, folk  
music became the voice of social change.

#### **April 24** - *1940-1945: The World at War*

Swing and big band music continued to dominate  
during the war years while other forms of music adapted  
and changed; new artists wrote songs in a style that  
influenced changes in the music world after the war.

## Lost and Found: Female Perspectives in Contemporary American Cinema

With Mr. Joseph Geddes, Supervisor of Curriculum,  
Instruction & Evaluation at the West Morris Regional  
School District, former WMCHS teacher of Film Analysis

**6:30 pm - 7:30 pm**

In recent decades a generation of American female  
filmmakers has reshaped the cinematic landscape  
with bold, intimate, and emotionally resonant  
storytelling. Working across genres and styles these  
directors offer fresh perspectives on identity,  
belonging, and what we gain and lose through our  
human connections.

The films in this series trace the subtle spaces  
between isolation and intimacy, resistance and  
growth, loss and self-discovery. Through personal,  
often understated narratives, these filmmakers  
challenge traditional cinematic tropes and bring to  
light the emotional complexity of modern life. Each  
work invites us to consider what it means to be seen,  
to remember, and to find meaning in disconnection  
and change.

**April 9** - Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*: The Art  
of Emotional Distance

**April 16** - Sarah Polley's *Stories We Tell*: Memory  
and the Self as Story

**April 23** - Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird*: The Messy  
Beauty of Adolescence

**April 30** - Debra Granik's *Leave No Trace*: The  
American Frontier Reimagined