

Abstracts and Biographies

DAY 1 - Wednesday, April 22 2026

Francesco Arese Visconti

Bio

Francesco Arese Visconti is an Italian and Swiss visual communication scholar, photographer and professor at Webster University Geneva. He serves as head of the Media Studies Program and deputy academic director while directing the Webster Center for Creativity and Innovation. Arese Visconti's research explores the intersections of migration, identity and photographic representation. His recent book, "The Invisible Diaspora" (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), examines 21st-century Italian migrants in Switzerland's Arc Lémanique region. His work, exhibited throughout Europe, focuses on migrant communities' sociocultural narratives. Notable exhibitions include the Swiss Pavilion at EXPO 2015 in Milan and the National Museum of Italian Emigration in Genoa (2024). His research encompasses African immigration in Switzerland and the Italian-Chinese community in Prato, Italy. Arese Visconti, recipient of the William T. Kemper Award for Excellence in Teaching, is a member of several academic and professional organizations. He is also a trained archaeologist.

Eric Click

Bio

Eric Click joined Webster Geneva in 2023. He has more than 20 years of academic and administrative experience in student retention and success, assessment and accreditation, curriculum development and design, and blended and distance learning. Click's former position titles include academic director, head of department, program chair, Higher Learning Commission peer reviewer, and tenured associate professor. His scholarship has focused on public financing and economics, market failure and intervention, and the social impact of nonprofits. Before joining Webster Geneva, Click served as acting vice-rector for academics at Webster University Tashkent and chair of the Academic Council at Webster University Tbilisi. Click holds a PhD from the University of Texas-Dallas.

Abstract

Global Professional Citizenship: Expertise, Accuracy and Reliability

Carlo Ferrigno

Bio

Carlo Ferrigno is an astrophysicist specializing in high-energy astrophysics and multi-messenger astronomy. He leads the INTEGRAL Science Data Centre (ISDC), which oversees the scientific quality of data from the gamma-ray telescope INTEGRAL, manages the mission's data archive for guest observers, and distributes the software used to analyze INTEGRAL observations. The INTEGRAL telescope studies some of the most energetic phenomena in the universe, including black holes and neutron stars as they form or accrete vast amounts of gas.

Ferrigno's research focuses on the search for electromagnetic counterparts of gravitational-wave events, the physics of accretion onto stellar-mass neutron stars and black holes, cosmic rays, and galaxy clusters. He leads the Geneva participation in the Astrophysics Centre for Multi-messenger studies in Europe (ACME) and the European infra-Serv project.

He also serves as project manager for the Swiss participation in UVEX, a NASA ultra-violet space telescope mission planned for launch in 2030. In addition, he chairs Working Group 5 on Multi-messenger Astronomy for the New-Athena initiative. Previously, he was the project manager of Astro-ORDAS, a Swiss open-research data initiative.

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence in Astronomy: My Personal View

Methods of machine learning have been used for several decades in astronomical research. The problem of classifying large datasets or inferring elusive properties in large samples is an ideal application of automated algorithms. In this process, it is fundamental to deeply understand the nature of data, the strengths and weaknesses of methods, and make a continuous research to assess the quality of the results. This effort can last years or even decades, but it is essential to crunch data that are becoming very large. I will bring the example of the groups working on classification of variable stars, on the determination of distances, on the detection of sources, and determination of their shapes.

In the recent years, the emergence of powerful large language models has revolutionized research and teaching. Even though there are attempts to use them in astrophysical research, their main current impact is on the daily work, resulting in enhanced productivity to write code, proposals, reports, and papers, or to generate illustrations. A critical approach is always necessary using these instruments.

Julianna Sandholm-Bark

Bio

Julianna Sandholm-Bark, PhD, has over 20 years of experience working in international education, teaching courses in art history on a regular basis since 2008. As the Head of the Global Citizenship Program since 2017, she oversees the institution's liberal arts curriculum which hosts courses in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, and which provides students with a core educational foundation that emphasizes critical thinking skills. From 2018 to 2023, she oversaw the Meet the Artist Lecture and Podcast Series, an educational initiative that brought Geneva's creative community to the Webster campus. She has been contributing her expertise in art and education at Geneva's annual art fair artgenève since 2019. A contributor to the "Palgrave Encyclopedia of the Possible," she has presented her work on art and pedagogy at numerous academic conferences since 2014. Her most recent publication explores how curatorial and practice-led teaching methods transforms contemporary art education for non-art history majors. Through case studies at artgenève and Meet the Artist, it argues that experiential learning fosters deeper cultural literacy, critical inquiry, and student agency.

Olena Iarmosh

Bio

PhD, lecturer, and researcher with over 20 years of experience as a project coordinator, trainer, and lecturer in Entrepreneurship, Creative Entrepreneurship, Business Planning, and Project Management. Coordinator in Ukraine for the Create Creative Entrepreneurs Project within the Creative Spark: Higher Education Enterprise Programme by the British Council (2018-2022). Recipient of Individual Project Grants from House of Europe for developing gamified methodologies in entrepreneurship training. Author of the video course Formation of Entrepreneurial Competence in Educational Institutions. Certified LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® facilitator

Abstract

LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method and Gamification in Higher Education: Engaging Adult Learners Through Facilitated Play

The increasing complexity of educational challenges in higher education requires innovative, inclusive, and engaging teaching methodologies, particularly when working with adult learners. This paper explores the application of the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® (LSP)

method as a gamified, facilitation-based approach. Originally developed for strategic thinking and innovation in business and organizational settings, the LSP method has also been widely applied in psychology, coaching, community development, and leadership training. LSP is a hands-on, minds-on method grounded in neuroscience, constructivist learning theory, and facilitated dialogue. Through building three-dimensional models with LEGO® bricks, participants externalize their thinking, use metaphors to express complex ideas, and engage in structured reflection and storytelling. This process creates a psychologically safe space in which hierarchy, language barriers, and professional status are minimized, ensuring that every participant contributes equally. The author draws on extensive experience of integrating the LSP method into higher education courses such as Strategic Management, Project Management, and International Management, as well as into professional workshops including Career Roadmap sessions and focus groups within professional communities. Despite initial skepticism often observed among adult learners, the method consistently results in full engagement, deep reflection, creativity, and high-quality collective outcomes. A key case study discussed in the paper is the series of workshops developed within Going Global Partnerships programme by the British Council. The project, A Career Roadmap for Women's Leadership in Higher Education in Ukraine, used an LSP-based workshop to collect qualitative data that informed the development of a leadership roadmap. This led to the creation of an interactive career map inspired by the board game Snakes and Ladders. The paper concludes that the unique value of the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method lies not in a predefined outcome, but in the learning process itself, where thinking, analysis, and collective meaning-making emerge organically and differently in each group. LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method, Gamification, Higher Education, Adult Learning, Participatory Learning

Julia Sader

Bio

Julia Sader, PhD, is a distinguished academic and researcher with expertise in psychology and medical education. She holds a PhD in Biomedical Sciences (Medical Education) from the University of Geneva, a Master's in Developmental Psychology from UCL and a BA in Psychology with a Philosophy minor from Webster University (magna cum laude). Her work focuses on integrating psychological principles into medical education and understanding cognitive and emotional development across life stages. Her academic excellence and interdisciplinary approach make her a respected figure in her field.

Abstract

Can your Decision-Making be Improved with the Use of a Serious Game

The theme of this panel will include how Serious Games in the realm of Medicine can help tackle Cognitive Biases and improve decision making skills. Julia Sader unveils insights into how serious games can revolutionize medical education. Drawing from a scoping review, a randomized controlled trial with 127 participants across five Swiss hospitals, and a correlational study, this session explores how gamified approaches mitigate cognitive biases and empower medical residents to make better decisions under pressure. Discover the transformative potential of serious games in shaping the future of healthcare training. Don't miss this engaging panel discussion at the intersection of innovation and medicine!

Agnese Pastorino

Bio

Agnese Pastorino, Ph.D., is a social scientist specializing in youth culture, the sociology of media, and digital communication. She holds doctorates from Sorbonne University and Sapienza University, where she studied young people's uses of the Internet. Her current work explores how youth engage with digital technologies for educational, informational, and entertainment purposes, and how these practices shape their peer-to-peer culture. Agnese has collaborated with WHO and UNICEF on digital communication, infodemic management, and audience insights. She is a member of the GAPMIL Global Alliance for Media and Information Literacy (UNESCO) and serves on the External Review Panel of Education Cannot Wait (UNICEF).

Abstract

Learning Media Skills Beyond the Classroom: Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Cultures on YouTube and Udemy and Their Implications for Higher Education

University students increasingly turn to digital platforms such as YouTube and Udemy to acquire practical media skills that complement - or at times substitute - formal coursework. This paper examines how these platforms function as peer-to-peer knowledge ecosystems where students and young creators teach, share, and co-construct competencies central to media studies programs, including photography, filmmaking, cinematography, video editing, animation, multimedia production, and digital communication. These creator-led environments offer accessible, visually driven, and project-based instruction that responds directly to students' creative and technical needs. Grounded in sociological theories of communities of practice, digital literacy, and informal

learning, the study employs a mixed qualitative design combining digital ethnography with comparative platform analysis. Digital ethnography on YouTube and Udemy involves systematic observation of tutorials, creator pedagogies, comment-based interactions, and the circulation of templates, presets, project files, and behind-the-scenes explanations. The comparative platform analysis examines how the affordances of YouTube and Udemy - such as structure, interactivity, pedagogy, and community features - shape distinct modes of peer learning: YouTube fosters rapid, trend-driven, visually immersive micro-learning, while Udemy supports structured, sequential, curriculum-based mastery. Findings reveal that these peer-to-peer media knowledge cultures decentralize expertise, accelerate creative skill acquisition, and significantly influence students' learning trajectories before and during university. The paper argues that higher education must adapt to this evolving landscape by acknowledging peer-generated knowledge, integrating platform-based learning modalities, and supporting hybrid pedagogical models that combine formal instruction with creator-driven, community-supported learning. Ultimately, the study calls for universities to act as connective infrastructures that bridge academic knowledge with the dynamic, practical, and rapidly developing media learning cultures emerging on YouTube and Udemy.

Milena Claudius

Bio

Milena Claudius, PhD, is a Clinical and Counseling Psychologist and faculty member in the Department of Psychology and Professional Counseling. She serves as the Head of the Counseling program and co-leads the services of the University Counseling Center. Her clinical experience spans psychiatric emergency care, inpatient and adult outpatient programs, and community psychotherapy clinics. She completed her APA-approved clinical psychology fellowship at Cambridge Hospital/ Harvard Medical School. Her work integrates clinical practice with research focused on the intersection of psychology, social justice and human rights. She has a specialization in health psychology and a particular interest in understanding how sociocultural factors shape mental health experiences. Her most recent publications explore risk and resilience in immigration, along with how cultural idioms of distress may be reflective of trauma. Currently, she is investigating moral injuries among humanitarian workers. Claudius was previously recognized as a Scholar in Multicultural Concerns by the American Psychological Association's Division 39 (Psychoanalysis), highlighting her commitment to culturally responsive and socially engaged psychological work.

Stephanie Thrower

Dr. Stephanie Thrower is a psychologist and AI coach who helps values-driven experts teach, reach and sell better with AI tools. Drawing from 15+ years in therapy and a deep background in vocational, identity, and performance psychology, she blends psychology, research, resilience and purpose to support career-changing (and life-changing) growth. Stephanie is also a mom of three, an AI tool creator, and a not-quite-there-yet gardener who loves good food, being outdoors with her crew and listening to deep-dive Bravo podcasts.

Sophie Klose

Sophie Klose is a Psychological Counsellor based in Zurich who specialises in working with adolescents and young adults. She commenced retraining as a mental health practitioner in 2019, completing a BA in Psychology at the Open University followed by a Master's in Counselling at Webster University Geneva in 2025. Her thesis examined AI chatbots in simulated counselling contexts for adolescents and young adults. Sophie maintains her private practice Flourishing Psychology & Wellbeing, serves as a counsellor at Foundations for Learning, and partners with Metamorphosis. Passionate about the intersection of technology and mental health, she is currently developing webinars exploring AI's impact on cognition and psychological wellbeing for the general public, mental health practitioners, and the neurodivergent community.

Audrey Selian

Audrey Selian is Director of Artha Impact at Rianta Capital Zurich AG, where she has led the Singh Family Trust's impact investment advisory work since 2006. She has overseen many dozens of investments across India in sectors such as health, livelihoods, WASH, agribusiness, and energy - focused on positive business models and inclusive, last-mile solutions. Audrey also sits on the boards of several Artha portfolio companies and advises a range of funds and nonprofits globally. She is the co-founder of Artha Networks Inc. (ANI), a SaaS platform supporting investor collaboration and deal discovery, and founded the Artha Impact platform in India - an ecosystem of 170+ investors, 80 enterprise support organizations, and hundreds of social enterprises. Audrey is also co-founder of Impact for Breakfast, a global community of 5,980+ impact investors across 50+ cities, as well as of Baraka Impact Finance and Impact Hub Yerevan in Armenia. She previously served as advisor to Halloran Philanthropies and holds roles on several investment committees and advisory boards. Audrey holds a Ph.D. in Technology Policy from The Fletcher School at Tufts University, was a doctoral fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and earned degrees from the London School of Economics and Wellesley College. Audrey is a

frequent speaker on impact investing and technology for systems change, and published *The Business of Building a Better World* published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers in 2022. Audrey is currently based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Benjamin Joseph

Bio

Benjamin Joseph is a musician, educator and learning technologist with more than two decades of experience in music education. He recently joined Webster University Geneva, where he teaches courses exploring how musical traditions reflect cultural identity, creativity and social history. He previously taught at the Rochester Institute of Technology, with courses including blues history and ethnomusicology. Benjamin holds a Master of Arts in Ethnomusicology from SOAS University of London and a Bachelor of Arts in Music Production from the University of Alabama. His teaching career spans higher education, community arts programs and social inclusion projects supporting at-risk youth, refugees and adult learners. In the private sector, Benjamin worked in Learning and Development at the Wall Street Journal, managing digital training platforms. As a performer, he specializes in Americana and blues traditions, having toured and recorded throughout the U.K., France, Switzerland and North America. His work connects musical practice with innovative approaches to digital learning.

Description

Student Presentations: The Art of Music Curation

This session showcases the culmination of a full semester of academic inquiry into the cultural, technical, and emotional power of music. Six student groups present the research and methodology behind three distinct playlists, explaining how they integrated course themes such as the evolution of the Blues, electronic music, and songs that personally resonate with them into their sequencing. Beyond mere song selection, students will discuss the significance behind the sound by defending their specific choices through the lens of identity, tradition, and global perspectives. This presentation bridges the gap between classroom learning and public engagement to offer a deep dive into how the next generation of listeners perceive and curate the global soundscape. By examining the transition from traditional folk music to contemporary streaming culture, these students demonstrate how curation serves as a form of modern authorship. Attendees will gain insight into the pedagogical process of teaching for uncertainty as students explain their collaborative decision making and the challenges of representing complex cultural histories through a digital medium. This session serves as a vital precursor to the evening

event, providing the conceptual spark for the music that will later drive the high-energy vibe of the conference.

The Silent Disco: Sonic Immersion

Closing the first day of the conference, this Silent Disco transforms the traditional networking event into a live and multi-channel research experiment. Participants are invited to navigate three unique audio streams meticulously designed by students that reflect diverse global perspectives ranging from Swiss electronic pioneers to K-Pop and African roots. By utilizing silent disco technology, the event mirrors the modern ear's ability to switch between genres and narratives instantaneously to foster an environment of individualized yet collective expression. This interactive session allows attendees to experience firsthand the concepts of embodied rhythm and curated identity while providing a vibrant and high-energy conclusion to the day's exploration of creativity and innovation. The event functions as a practical application of course concepts like rhythm and the body, where the audience becomes an active participant in a shared musical narrative. By wearing headphones, participants can choose their own sonic journey, highlighting the rise of the DJ as a modern storyteller in the digital age. This celebration of sound and silence provides a unique opportunity for conference goers to engage with student work in a sensory and social environment that exemplifies the spirit of the Creativity and Innovation Days.

DAY 2 - Thursday, April 23 2026

Aleksandra Vuichard

Bio

Aleksandra Vuichard is a researcher in Educational Sciences whose work focuses on creativity, pedagogical innovation, and emotions in educational contexts. Building on her doctoral research on the pedagogy of creativity in teacher education, she explores how innovative and reflective approaches can foster creativity and teacher professional development. She regularly collaborates with higher education institutions and contributes to international conferences and professional development programs across Europe.

Abstract

The power of creativity in education and research

As higher education institutions confront accelerating societal and technological change,

creativity is increasingly recognized as a core competence of the twenty-first century for both students and academics. This presentation draws on a comprehensive literature review on creativity and its role in research and teaching at the university level, examining how creativity is conceptualized in higher education scholarship and how it may serve as a bridge between research production and teaching practice.

From the perspective of teacher education and professional development, innovation emerges not merely as the implementation of new tools or technologies, but as a process grounded in creative reflexivity. Educators are encouraged to mobilize flexible and reflective pedagogical strategies to adapt to diverse contexts, design meaningful learning experiences, and generate new possibilities. The presentation further explores how creative reflexivity enables educators to integrate emerging practices, respond to institutional transformations, and sustain pedagogical renewal.

By connecting theoretical frameworks with practical implications, this contribution aims to foster dialogue on how universities can cultivate creative ecosystems that strengthen the dynamic relationship between research and teaching.

Julia Langkau

Bio

Julia Langkau is a philosopher specializing in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, and epistemology. She is SNSF PRIMA Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Geneva and leads the Geneva Research Group Creativity and Imagination. Her research explores imagination, empathy, creativity, and the role of fiction in understanding ourselves and others. Her work bridges philosophy, literature, and cognitive science, examining how imaginative processes shape knowledge, interpretation, and creative thinking in both everyday and artistic contexts.

Abstract

How to Think about the Creative Process

This presentation argues that creativity is best understood as a process rather than a property of finished products. Focusing on active creativity, it examines how creative (art) work unfolds through acts of imagining, attending, and revising, guided by what the creating subject finds valuable. Values shape the process from the beginning by directing attention to possibilities as they emerge, rather than entering only at the stage of evaluation. The talk further suggests that engaging with artworks can itself involve creative participation. Understanding creativity in this way helps clarify how creativity can be taught and cultivated as a practice rather than as the production of outcomes.

Petya Ivanova

Bio

Petya Ivanova is a literary scholar, educator and opera dramaturg with a PhD in English Literature from the University of Geneva, where she specialized in medieval literature. Her academic experience includes teaching literature and creative writing at the University of Geneva and theatre studies at the University of Plovdiv in Bulgaria. As a freelance opera dramaturg, Ivanova has collaborated with opera houses in Geneva, Lausanne and Bordeaux, contributing literary and historical interpretation to productions. She writes original texts for contemporary Bulgarian jazz compositions, bridging scholarly research and creative expression through her work with language, performance and cultural history.

Francesco Pennacchio

Bio

Francesco Pennacchio is a multidisciplinary professional whose expertise spans chemistry, physics, public health and visual storytelling. He holds a BS and MS in chemistry from the University of Pavia, Italy, and a doctorate in physical chemistry from École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL). After his scientific career, he transitioned to data science and population health, coordinating the Specchio-COVID-19 digital study, which tracked 20,000 participants during the pandemic. Pennacchio holds an MA in photojournalism and documentary photography from the University of the Arts London. His photography explores themes of memory and identity, with work exhibited internationally at Galleria Civica Bosio, IPFO Haus der Fotografie, Modern Art Oxford and Il Meccanico. His work has appeared in Lonely Planet Magazine and LensCulture, earning recognition at the PhEST Open Call for Being Human, Athens Photo Festival and Siena Drone Photo Awards. In addition to teaching at Webster University Geneva, Pennacchio collaborates with the Visual Art Biennale Images Vevey, teaches photography in Geneva and maintains a freelance practice combining scientific insight with visual storytelling.

Holli Schaubert

Bio

Dr. Holli Schaubert, Ed.D., is a senior lecturer in the Didactics of English as a Foreign Language and Research Methods at the University of Geneva's Institute for Teacher Education, and an adjunct faculty member at Webster University, where she teaches Academic Writing, ESL, and Global Cornerstone courses. Her teaching and research are

conducted as related activities with publications addressing the practical and pluripedagogical issues in teacher education; the pedagogical use of ChatGPT to develop and evaluate teacher knowledge; and the use of synchronous screencast feedback and AI to support academic writing skills with students from across the disciplinary spectrum.

Description

Interdisciplinary Open Forum (moderated by Holli Schaubert – Faculty Only)

This interactive session explores the significant pedagogical and ethical impact of AI on the teaching of academic writing. It involves confronting some difficult truths about our instructional choices with an eye toward practical solutions moving forward. To frame the discussion, we will briefly examine the prevailing views, which lean toward either the potential benefits or the possible risks of AI. Both positions signal the need for meaningful practical changes that allow us to approach teaching in informed ways for: retooling writing assignments, assessment methods, feedback practices, the development of learner autonomy, critical thinking, and digital literacy. Together, we will identify practical, feasible, and adaptable solutions. For that purpose, you will need your phone handy to scan the QR Code for our discussion and your contributions to it.

Description

Student Performances (moderated by Petya Ivanova): Creative Writing and Theatre Event

Students enrolled in the course *Creative writing: Finding your Creative Voice in Geneva and Theatre: From Page to Performance* will present their work and creative projects. Theatrical sketches, performances, and text readings will alternate with students sharing their insights on creativity.

The Renegade Saints

Bio

Renegade Saints are an English-speaking international group of comedy improvisers whom fate has brought to Geneva. Blending a range of comedy backgrounds in typically Genevan international community style, they perform comedy shows regularly in Geneva and around Europe.

Description

Theatre Improvisation Show

Fast. Funny. Made Up. is the Renegade Saints' flagship comedy show and the longest-running English-speaking improv comedy show in Geneva. Known for breaking attendance records, Swiss fire codes, and causing belly laughs so strong they register on the Richter scale, FFMU has become legendary for its fun, fast, and hilarious comedy atmosphere.

Belly laughs guaranteed!

What is it though? Well, it's simple: they make up scenes based on the audience's ideas.

DAY 3 - Friday, April 24 2026

Tanya Accone

Bio

Tanya Accone is Senior Programme Manager (Digital Inclusion & Giga) at UNICEF, where she leads global efforts to connect every child-facing public service to the internet.

Working at the intersection of infrastructure, innovation, and financing, she drives strategies that translate connectivity into opportunity at scale. With over 15 years across the UN system, Tanya has advanced innovation and digital transformation in more than 100 countries. She previously founded UNICEF's Innovation Nodes and co-led its Global Innovation Centre, shaping approaches to scale solutions across complex systems. Her work focuses on turning ambitious ideas into sustained impact—bridging technology, policy, and partnerships to expand access, equity, and possibility for the next generation.

Abstract

From Innovation to Impact: Scaling Connectivity, Expanding Opportunity

This keynote examines what becomes possible when innovation moves beyond isolated success to achieve real scale—transforming systems, expanding access, and reshaping lives. At its core is a global ambition: to connect every school to the internet, and every young person to information, opportunity, and choice. Because when connectivity reaches scale, it does more than close a digital divide—it opens pathways to learning, participation, and economic mobility for entire generations. But scale is not the endpoint. Sustained impact demands continual reinvention—the discipline to challenge assumptions, adapt to shifting realities, and design for what comes next. As technology, education, and society converge, the ability to innovate repeatedly becomes as critical as the first breakthrough. This keynote reflects on what it takes to build initiatives that endure, how collaboration enables scale, and why the most transformative ideas are those that remain dynamic.

Ultimately, it is an argument for ambition: not only to connect the unconnected, but to continually expand what that connection makes possible.

Marcia Banks

Bio

Marcia Banks is an educator and creative learning advocate dedicated to fostering inquiry, collaboration, and innovative thinking in students. With a background as a Vice Principal, Curriculum Coordinator, primary school science teacher, and classroom teacher, she brings extensive experience in education to her current role as Association Director of Odyssey of the Mind Switzerland, where she has been actively involved since 2005. Marcia is passionate about exploring the connections between creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and empathy. Beyond her leadership in Odyssey of the Mind, she contributes to educational development through published pedagogical work on Le Pôle, a

free and accessible platform for sharing teaching practices. She is also engaged in global education initiatives, supporting Education for All Sierra Leone alongside Martine Coppens.

Abstract

What Happens When Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Courage Become the Heart of Learning?

Marco Prato

Bio

Marco Prato is a seasoned Senior Program Manager with over 25 years of experience in IT consulting and digital transformation. He holds multiple professional certifications including PMI PMP®, HERMES, ITIL 4, and Scrum Master, and has led complex, multinational programs across industries. Currently working at Atos AG Switzerland, Marco manages strategic IT portfolios for clients such as Nestlé and Nespresso, overseeing more than 20 concurrent projects with an annual budget exceeding \$3 million. His expertise spans project governance, agile delivery, ERP implementations, and digital innovation. Marco has successfully steered global initiatives such as Nespresso's premium vending machine program and the development of an omni-channel CRM platform based on Salesforce. In recent months, Marco has been actively involved in internal initiatives at Atos to define a structured learning path for project managers on how to leverage Generative AI (GenAI) in their roles. This includes exploring GenAI's potential to enhance project delivery and outlining methodologies—such as CPMI—for implementing traditional AI projects effectively.

Marco holds a Master's degree in Business and IT from the Netherlands and a degree in Economy and Business Administration from the University of Turin. He is fluent in Italian, English, and French, and brings a multicultural perspective to his work and teaching.

Description

Embracing the Use of AI in Academia

This session explores the transformative potential of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in higher education, with a focus on empowering experienced university educators. Over the workshop of one hour, participants will engage with practical examples using tools like Microsoft Copilot. Activities will include live demonstrations of lesson planning, quiz generation, academic writing support, and multilingual content adaptation.

Interactive exercises will allow attendees to experiment with GenAI in real-time, fostering collaborative exploration and critical discussion. By the end of the session, educators will gain a clearer understanding of how GenAI can become a strategic ally in academia, supporting innovation, personalization, and responsible digital transformation.

Rémy Smida

Bio

Rémy Smida is a digital insights specialist and the founder of Research for Purpose, a consultancy that supports international organizations through advanced social listening, AI-assisted analytics, and digital behaviour research. His work focuses on analysing large-scale online discourse, emerging technologies, misinformation ecosystems, and public engagement across crises, development, and global health. Rémy has led research projects for UN agencies, INGOs, and academic partners, integrating qualitative and quantitative digital methods to generate actionable insights for policy and communication strategies. He is recognized for his expertise in understanding how digital environments influence public narratives, institutional trust, and decision-making.

Abstract (with Agnese Pastorino)

AI Literacy in Higher Education: A Comparative Social Media Analysis of Educator and Student Discourses (2024-2025)

As generative AI rapidly reshapes academic practice, university educators and students are renegotiating the roles, expectations, and ethics of learning in AI-mediated environments. Yet these groups articulate this transformation through distinct—and often divergent—discursive frameworks. This study, conducted in collaboration with Research for Purpose, examines one year of public online discourse (Nov 2024–Nov 2025) across TikTok, X/Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Reddit to analyze how professors and students conceptualize the opportunities and challenges of AI in higher education. Using a social listening methodology and complex Boolean search queries, we extracted and compared the dominant conversational themes emerging from educators and students. Findings reveal clear contrasts: educators frame generative AI primarily as a pedagogical and productivity tool, emphasizing curriculum design, lesson planning, research efficiency, and administrative support. Their discourse is cautiously optimistic yet anchored in concerns over academic integrity, over-automation, and the preservation of the human dimension in teaching. Students, by contrast, predominantly describe AI as a pragmatic learning aid used to navigate academic pressure—ranging from writing support to study guidance—while expressing anxieties around cheating boundaries, fairness in AI-

mediated assessment, and the absence of clear institutional guidelines. Both groups converge in calling for structured governance, transparency, and AI literacy training, highlighting the need for universities to develop evidence-based policies that support ethical, equitable, and effective AI use. The study concludes by arguing that higher education institutions must adopt a dual strategy that addresses educators' implementation challenges while equipping students with the competencies necessary for responsible AI-enabled learning.

Gigi Polo

Bio

Gigi Polo (Niberca Lluberes) is a Dominican-born designer, educator, and filmmaker whose work bridges speculative design, inclusive education, and visual culture. She is the founder of Gigi Polo Lab, a research and design practice grounded in a Design Futures framework for innovation. The Lab collaborates with mission-driven organizations to reimagine systems, environments, and experiences that advance equity, wellness, and neuroinclusion. From 2021 to 2023, Gigi served as Design Director at Dauphin Americas, leading design services, sustainability initiatives, and showroom experiences for workplace wellbeing. She has also worked across branding, marketing strategy, and space design for architecture, nonprofit, and corporate clients. Gigi holds a BFA from Parsons School of Design, where she has taught design courses since 2006 across the creative disciplines and currently serves as a Part-Time Associate Teaching Professor. Her pedagogy weaves together design theory, social justice, mental health, and language justice across studio, systems thinking, and DEI-driven design courses. She has also taught at Montclair State University, CUNY, LIM College, and internationally at Chavón School of Design and the Museum of Modern Art (MAM) in the Dominican Republic. Currently, she is a practice-based PhD candidate at RMIT University, where her project, *Osmotic Sensoria*, explores how multisensory design, AR/VR/MR/EEG technologies, and embodied cognition can transform learning environments for both neurodiverse and neurotypical learners. Her scholarship has been presented at international conferences, including Design Principles and Practices (Singapore, Madrid, Rome), The Image Conference (Paris), and DEL (Singapore), and published in *SPARK Journal (UAL)*, *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Design Studies*, *Plot(s)*, and *ICDPCA Proceedings*. A Part-Time Associate Teaching Professor at Parsons School of Design since 2006, Gigi develops courses that merge design theory, social justice, and neurodiversity. She is the author of *Second Language Through Design[ing]* (2017), a DEI-informed framework that supports multilingual learners in design classrooms, and the creator of the Sprint-to-Pacing model for intensive learning—now central to her doctoral inquiry. Her creative and academic

contributions have earned recognition, including the Emergent Scholar Award in the Design Principles & Practices, Singapore, 2024; The Image Conference, France, 2025; the Design Principles & Practices in Rome, Pamplona, and Australia, 2026, recognizing research contributions in Spanish-language/Hispanic academic contexts; and the CUNY Transformative Learning in the Humanities Grant (2021). As a filmmaker, she directed *Madly Gifted* (2013), a documentary on bipolar disorder and creativity, which was widely screened and later integrated into the UTMB Psychiatry Clerkship Curriculum as an educational resource.

Abstract

Osmotic Sensoria:

Multisensory Learning Spaces and the Form of the Image in Society

In today's digital era, education must prepare new generations for unpredictable futures. The immediacy of live feeds and global connectedness poses challenges in navigating a restless, ever-changing world. Because of these constant shifts, the next generations must develop flexible ways of thinking that enable them to, organically and creatively, adapt to unforeseen conditions—ways of thinking that foster design-able, socially responsible, resilient minds. However, despite ongoing innovations and efforts to embrace different ways of thinking and creating—of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999)—the Banking Model of Education (Freire, 2000) still dominates educational systems, conditioning students to be passive receivers of academic content and reducing them to mere information repositories. This static, two-dimensional nature of traditional visual pedagogies negates the brain's preference for immersive, embodied experiences that engage multiple neuropathways (Kandel, 2012). Since neuroscientific research shows that learning is most effective when it is interactive, exploratory, and multisensory (Eagleman, 2020), Osmotic Sensoria advocates for immersive learning spaces that naturally stimulate brain learning systems (Kandel, 2001) through projected images, augmented soundscapes, and biophilic design in the built environment. This new paradigm (Neurodiversity model: Singer, 1998) of learning environments aims to embrace different cognitive styles—neurodivergents and neurotypicals alike—to foster neurodiverse communities. Through a series of speculative design probes, this project examines how spatially embedded images can transform educational environments into catalysts for creative thought in neurodiverse learning spaces. This body of research explores how visual interactive projections and soundscapes can transcend their representational function to become tools that reimagine immersive and embodied experience in the brain's learning systems.

Edward Boon

Bio

Edward Boon is a researcher and lecturer in marketing and entrepreneurship. His research interest covers the intersection between consumer behavior, social media and technology, and he has published papers in various peer-reviewed journals, including *Psychology & Marketing*, *Business Horizons*, and the *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*. His professional experience includes marketing positions at Procter & Gamble and online insurance broker First Europa. In 2017 he developed the educational marketing simulation game 'Battle of the Brewers.' Boon has a PhD in Industrial Marketing from the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, and an MBA from Erasmus Rotterdam School of Management. Edward Boon is a researcher and lecturer in marketing, strategy, and entrepreneurship. His research interests include the intersection of consumer behavior, social media, and technology. He has published papers in various peer-reviewed journals, including *Psychology & Marketing*, *Business Horizons*, the *Journal of Wine Research*, and *Tourism Management*. His professional experience includes marketing positions at Procter & Gamble and the online insurance broker First Europa. Boon has a PhD in Industrial Marketing from the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and an MBA from the Erasmus Rotterdam School of Management.

Abstract

What mail-order brides can teach us about writing with AI

Most of us were taught that good writing means good grammar, solid structure, and a few academic references. But now that AI can handle all of that effortlessly, the real advantage in writing isn't technical skill—it's knowing exactly who you're talking to. This is where radical empathy comes in: stepping into someone else's shoes, understanding what they care about, and shaping your message so it feels like it was written for them. It sounds obvious, yet it's mostly missing from university writing. Writing assignments normally don't define a specific audience, so students end up writing to please the professor. And because no one truly knows what professors want (occasionally not even they themselves), the result is safe, generic writing that could be addressed to anyone—and therefore resonates with no one. But when you choose a clear, specific audience with real motivations and frustrations, the writing comes alive. It becomes sharper, more relevant, and far more engaging. This principle is well known in marketing, where attention is scarce, and is often labeled "What's In It for Me? (WIIFM)". People care only about what feels personally meaningful. In our case study on mail-order brides, we'll see how everything

starts with identifying a very specific niche—and how speaking directly to that niche makes communication dramatically more effective than trying to appeal to a general audience. By shifting from “writing to finish the assignment” to “writing for someone who actually cares,” and by using AI as a creative partner rather than an editor, students can create writing that’s clearer, bolder, and much more impactful.

Veronika Kac

Bio

Veronika is a dance and movement educator with over 15 years of experience in teaching and guiding people of all ages through embodied practices. She holds a master’s degree in physical education with a specialization in dance and strength training, and is certified in Brahmani Embodied Dance and Reiki. After teaching in Switzerland for nine years and leading the dance department at Collège du Léman, Veronika now offers embodied dance workshops, somatic practices, and Reiki healing. Through her approach, she supports participants to reconnect with themselves, release tension, and discover greater ease and self-awareness through mindful movement.

Description

Emotions in Motion

This is a nurturing workshop designed to help you explore, understand, and move through your emotions in a conscious and embodied way. Through a blend of gentle movement, stress regulation techniques, guided meditation, visualization, and breathwork, you’ll discover practical tools to release tension, anxiety, and overwhelm from your body. This journey invites you to reconnect with yourself, listen to what your body holds, and learn how to process emotions with curiosity, compassion, and awareness. Together, we’ll create a safe space for reflection and expression—where movement becomes medicine and stillness reveals insight.

By the end of the session, participants will have experienced a space of softness, expression, and deep presence for gentle embodied movement, learnt stress & anxiety regulation tools through guided meditation and visualization, breathwork to calm and ground, and journaling prompts for inner clarity (bring a notebook!).

No previous experience needed, just a willingness to move, feel, and be present.