

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
ALUMNI AWARDS CEREMONY



10.18.24

Broad Art Museum
547 E Circle Dr • East Lansing, Michigan

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Given to alumni who have differentiated themselves by obtaining the highest level of professional accomplishment.



DAVID W.
BLIGHT, PhD

Dr. David Blight is a world-renowned historian, a critically-acclaimed author and a beloved professor at Yale University. He is also a proud Social Science Spartan, graduating with his bachelor's degree in History in 1971 and then a Master's degree in 1976. Dr. Blight will be the 2025 May Commencement Alumni Speaker for the College of Social Science. Dr. Blight is Sterling Professor of History and Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University. In 2020, Yale President Peter Salovey appointed him as chair of the Yale and Slavery Working Group. With his Working Group colleagues, Blight authored the book *Yale and Slavery: A History*, a narrative study of Yale's historic involvement and associations with slavery and its aftermaths, published by Yale University Press in February of 2024. Blight previously taught at North Central College in Illinois, Harvard University, and Amherst College. He is the author or editor of a dozen books, including "Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom"; *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era*; "Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory"; and annotated editions of Douglass's first two autobiographies. He has worked on Douglass much of his professional life, and been awarded the Pulitzer Prize, the Bancroft Prize, the Abraham Lincoln Prize, and the Frederick Douglass Prize, among others. He writes frequently for the popular press, including the *Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, and many other journals. In 2020 David Blight was elected to the American Philosophical Society and awarded the Gold Medal for History by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Blight has always been a teacher first. At the beginning of his career, he spent seven years as a high school history teacher in his hometown of Flint, Michigan. Blight maintains a website, including information about public lectures, books, articles, and interviews at davidwblight.com.

YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD

Given to College of Social Science graduates who have distinguished themselves through a high level of professional accomplishment early in their career. These individuals demonstrate a commitment to the College of Social Science through outstanding volunteer service on behalf of the university, and/or participation and leadership in meritorious public service on a local, state, national, or international level.



CHARLIE
BOOHER

Charlie Booher, an MSU alumnus, is a Consultant at Watershed Results who specializes in natural resource conflict resolution. Charlie is dedicated to building a better world for people and for wildlife through coalition building and strategic advocacy at all levels of government.

Charlie previously served in communications and government relations roles for The Wildlife Society, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and Michigan United Conservation Clubs. He worked in the Executive Office of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department on translating research findings into better governance and was a Boone and Crockett Club Wildlife Conservation Fellow at the University of Montana.

Charlie holds undergraduate degrees in fisheries & wildlife conservation and public policy from Michigan State University and graduate degrees in wildlife biology, public administration, and natural resource conflict resolution from the University of Montana. During his time at MSU, Charlie was a very active member of the Social Science Scholars Program.

Charlie is an Associate Wildlife Biologist. Outside of the office, you can find him hiking in the mountains of Western Montana and re-learning how to hunt and fish in the Northern Rockies.

PHILANTHROPY AWARD

Presented to an individual, family, association, corporation, or foundation with a proven record of providing major, ongoing financial support and leadership to the College of Social Science at Michigan State University.



BARBARA & MARK
GERSON

Barbara is a graduate of the College of Social Science (Psychology) and has a Certificate in Wellness Counseling from Cornell University. She had a successful career in sales and marketing in the construction industry in Los Angeles where she met her husband, Mark. Throughout her adult life, Barbara has participated in philanthropic activities, including volunteering in various school districts, tutoring and serving on boards.

Mark graduated from the University of Southern California. After a thriving career in writing, producing and acting, Mark became involved in real estate development.

The couple has made a difference in many ways at MSU. Most notably, they created The Gerson Family Mental Health Initiative in 2016. This program provides state-of-the-art prevention and intervention mental health resources to students. They have also been incredible supporters and leaders of the Social Science Scholars Program, an effort dedicated to undergraduate research and experiential learning for high achieving students from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds.

Their philanthropy has included two documentaries which they participated in with the hope of healing the world. Before joining the film, “Unbroken” as Executive Producers in December 2021, Barbara & Mark Gerson were Executive Producers of the Oscar-nominated 2015 film, “The Hunting Ground”, which shed light on the issue of sexual assault across American college campuses. In addition, they have served and continue to serve on several boards including those associated with educational and health-oriented organizations including Hospice of Michigan and Munson Hospital in Northern Michigan.

Barbara and Mark have two adult children and reside in Arcadia Michigan.



THANK YOU

Congratulations to all of the
award recipients!



OUR SCIENCE **TRANSFORMS THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE**
AND INSPIRES LEADERS



College of Social Science
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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