Radford University’s Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies (PHRE) announces the resumption of Worldviews—our annual undergraduate research conference—on April 6, 2022, on the main campus of Radford University. This conference spotlights student research that addresses the “big questions” of being human, the distinctly human need for an interpretive orientation to life.

Together with the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Lab, PHRE invites proposals for 15-minute presentations that address the theme, “Hope to Think Otherwise.”

In his essay “Hope in the Face of Heartbreak,” performance studies scholar and queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz asserts that “hope’s biggest obstacle is failure. …Hope falters, we lose hope, but we need hope to think otherwise in the face of odds that are stacked against us.” When societies encounter problems, humans turn to meaning-making systems in order to understand, explain, and persist in the face of crisis. Through expressions of experience—whether in philosophies, religions, literatures, historical frameworks, or other expressive modes—humans formulate resilience and find ways forward, through hope. The current global pandemic sets in sharp relief only our most recent encounters with the inequities, divisions, and hardships that comprise humanity’s most significant and longstanding obstacles. And yet we persist, imagining other possible futures.

In exploration of this theme, we invite proposals of papers, projects, performances, or presentations in other formats that contemplate the human capacity to think otherwise, against the odds. How have humans found hope and resilience in moments of crisis? Whether in our present moment or in the past, how have individuals and societies generated techniques to find ways forward through world-scale challenges?

Proposals might consider, among others, such topics as:
- spiritual and mental health practices
- representations of struggle, survival, suffering, or despair
- theoretical contemplation of hope, challenge, and resistance
- ethical responses to inequity, division, and deprivation
- understandings of identity, solidarity, or exclusion
- connections between embodiment, experience, and wellness
- strategies for community organizing and collaboration

We also invite proposals that address the category of “worldview” more broadly. How have humans engaged distinctively in the search for meaning, identity, or understanding, across cultures and through time?

Conference organizers welcome the participation of undergraduate students from all departments, schools, and colleges at Radford University’s main campus and at Radford University Carilion in Roanoke. Please send a note of interest and a brief topic description by March 21, 2022, to Dr. Geoffrey Pollick (gpollick@radford.edu). Participants will be notified of acceptance by March 25, 2022.