

Friday, Mar 23, 2018

Historian to share tips on public engagement at OU Soundings Series

The Oakland University Research Office will present “Reaching the Public: Translating Teaching to a General Audience” — a Soundings Series event featuring **Karen Miller**, an associate professor and specialist in modern American political history at OU — from 3-4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 28 in room 242 in Elliott Hall.

“This event isn’t just about how Karen connects with communities, it’s also about how she changed her language, approach and pitch to suit non-academic audiences,” said Dr. David Stone, professor of health sciences and chief research officer at OU.

Each **Soundings Series** event features examples of OU faculty successfully taking their research out of the classroom and using it to engage the community and make a positive difference in the world.

On March 28, Miller will be using her successful presentation of the Detroit Race Riot of 1943 to demonstrate how to:

- Think about your audience
- Anticipate interest
- Avoid pitfalls

“The biggest misconception people have about Detroit in the 1940s is that everyone was happy,” Miller said, noting that Detroit had “the worst housing stock in the United States” prior to 1939.

“Then we started adding hundreds of thousands of people to the population without building any new housing for more people,” she said. “It was so bad that people were buying trailers in other parts of the country and dragging them here on old cars because there was no housing here, which meant that if you brought your family here, there was no place to put your children in school. And if there was a school nearby, it was a wood frame on stilts. There was no phone service or flushing toilets, and in the winter, all the pipes would freeze.”

Miller has been speaking about the “secret” history of Detroit at conferences, libraries and community events throughout southeast Michigan for nearly a decade.

“It used to be astonishing to me how little people know about Detroit’s history,” she said. “I think it’s in large part due to the exodus of the 1950s and 1960s. It was like Detroit was this horrible place that we didn’t need to know anything about. People don’t understand the basic history of Detroit, and that’s an issue.”

For more information about the Soundings Series, visit oakland.edu/research/soundings-series. To attend an event, RSVP to Leanne DeVreugd, program assistant for Women in Science, Engineering and Research (**WISER**) at Oakland University, at ldevreug@oakland.edu.



The next Soundings Series event at Oakland University will feature Karen Miller, an associate professor and specialist in modern American political history at OU. It will take place from 3-4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 28 in room 242 in Elliott Hall.