

Visiting Faculty Bios

WI-26

Benson, Robert

HS1128 Now what?: Finding purpose in chaotic times

Rob Benson has lived and worked on MDI since 2002, first as community minister serving 5 offshore islands via the Maine Seacoast Mission's Sunbeam, and more recently as pastor with Bar Harbor Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, a protestant Christian denomination known for its long history of inclusivity. Prior to moving to MDI, Rob worked as a hospital and hospice chaplain in urban and suburban Washington, DC, after an early career as an English teacher and swim coach. Rob received his BA in philosophy from Williams College with a concentration in the history of religious thought, and his Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School. Rob is firmly committed to fostering inclusive, engaging dialogue, and welcoming diverse perspectives and experiences.

Brothers , Tionna

ES3109 Organic Chemistry I

Tionna Brothers pioneered, and is currently completing a doctoral degree in a collaborative program between the Neuroscience department of Tufts University college of Medicine, and the Genetics department of The Jackson Laboratory. Her educational background includes years in Chemical and Biological Engineering, before switching paths and graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry, and a minor in Neuroscience. Post graduation, Tionna worked at the Jackson Laboratory on genetic models of glaucoma; focusing on both early detection methods and late-stage treatments that have now resulted in clinical trials. Scientific and educational interests include:

Neuroscience: with a special focus on glial mechanisms

Biochemistry: including applications for engineered molecules, and

Computational methods of analysis, including systems modeling.

While she is a true Mainer; raised in the north woods, educated in central Maine, and rooted on the coast for over a decade now; Tionna also brings with her personal and professional experiences from travels across the US/Canada/Mexico and countries including Portugal, Spain, Italy, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. On weekends with good weather she can be found adventuring around the mountains of Acadia National park, in her kayak floating along a stream, or riding a motorcycle down the coastal route. In less desirable temperatures (and most of the winter) Tionna fancies herself an amateur seamstress and enjoys making quilts or creating garments from recycled fabrics.

Diemler , Cory

ES1095 Physics I

Cory was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from Ball State University, where he developed a strong foundation in analytical thinking and scientific research. Driven by a growing interest in the complexities of the brain, he pursued graduate studies at the University of South Florida in Tampa, completing a Master's degree in Biomedical Science with a concentration in Neuroscience. There, he gained critical experience in neurobiological research, further fueling his passion for understanding the mechanisms underlying neurological disorders.

Currently, Cory is completing his Ph.D. at the University of Maine in collaboration with The Jackson Laboratory, a leading institution in genetics and genomics research. His doctoral research centers on modulating the genetics of microglia—the brain's resident immune cells—with the goal of identifying novel therapeutic strategies for neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and glaucoma. By investigating how genetic alterations in microglia can influence disease progression and neuroinflammation, his work aims to contribute to the development of more effective treatments for these currently incurable conditions.

Beyond the lab, Cory is an avid outdoor enthusiast. He enjoys stand-up paddleboarding, swimming, running, and hiking. He often spends his free time exploring nature trails with his wife and their dog, Lucky, finding balance and inspiration in the natural world.

Earley, Annika

AD1077 Fundamentals of Drawing

Annika Earley makes intimate graphite drawings about transformation, in-between states, and the experience of being a woman. She uses German folktales as reference points in her work and addresses contemporary feminist issues and bodily autonomy. In addition to her drawing practice, Earley also makes prints and creates site-specific audio installations. Earley holds an MFA from Maine College of Art and an M.Phil from College of the Atlantic. She has been a resident at the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation in Rockland, ME, Hewnoaks Artist Colony in Lovell, ME, Monson Arts in Monson, ME, and was accepted as a resident at the Vermont Studio Center in 2020. Her work has been most recently exhibited in a solo exhibition at Nightshade Contemporary in Littleton, New Hampshire. She has taught printmaking, painting, and foundations courses at Maine College of Art and Design and is the former Co-Director of Able Baker Contemporary in Portland, Maine. In addition to her studio practice, she is also the Managing Director of SPEEDWELL projects, an artist-run gallery in Portland, Maine.

Hilliard, Richard

ES1094 Chemistry I

Dr. Richard Hilliard grew up in Bar Harbor, ME attending MDI High School and College of the Atlantic. He completed his MS and PhD in Environmental Engineering at Oregon State University, studying nitrogen-cycling bacteria for the treatment of wastewater and phytoremediation of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and heavy metals using native Oregon plants. He is passionate about developing and discovering ways that plants and microorganisms can sustainably treat pollution and waste. He has significant experience with a variety of aqueous chemical analytic techniques, the fate and transport of chemical species, and remediation of water contamination. Outside of work, he enjoys soccer, cycling, house & techno music, literature, and writing.

Jacoby, Franklin R

HS2123 Our Life with Words: Philosophies of Language

Franklin Jacoby graduated from COA in 2012 before further pursuing philosophical study at the University of Edinburgh where he is a PhD candidate in philosophy. In addition to human ecology, his interests include mountaineering, paddling, literature, and birding.

Lepcio, Andrea

AD2047 10X Dramatic Writing Studio

Andrea Lepcio is a Maine-based playwright who writes fast and often. Most recently, she won the Maine Literary Award for Drama for her solo play Human in 2022 and was a finalist with The Last Jew in 2024. She is best known for Looking for the Pony, a finalist for the Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award and for the NEA Outstanding New American Play Award. Most recently, she was an Artist in Residence at Acadia National Park. Her climate change play, World Avoided, was commissioned by Sloan/EST and presented in a reading by EST as part of the First Lights Festival in 2017 and 2019. She has been produced regionally, in New York City, and internationally; three new plays have been produced since 2015. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild, was a Dramatists Guild Fellow, served as the Fellows Program Director for ten years, and is a Dramatists Guild Institute teacher. She is an adjunct at College of the Atlantic. Andrea is also a personal trainer and yoga teacher. M.F.A. Dramatic Writing, Carnegie Mellon University. B.A. Human Ecology, College of the Atlantic.

Lock, Timothy

AD1082 Sustainable Architecture: Ecological Artifact

As management partner at OPAL, Timothy Lock specializes in the management and direction of large-scale institutional projects and spearheads the practice's overall approach to building ecology and climate action. Timothy believes firmly in the importance of architectural design in producing transformational, ecological, and positive societal outcomes, and is committed to maintaining the highest quality of process and integrity of ecological architectural design, practice, and implementation. He received his professional architectural degree with honors from Syracuse University. Prior to relocating to Maine, he then practiced extensively in New York City with several firms on a wide range of residential and commercial design projects. Timothy sits on the Maine AIA Board of Directors, the AIA National Strategic Council, and is the Co-Chair of the Maine AIA Committee on the Environment.

McLean, Adam

AD4060 Advanced Music Theory

Adam McLean, M.M.Ed., has fourteen years of experience teaching music at all levels, from pre-K through graduate school. Adam holds degrees from The Boston Conservatory and Skidmore College, and he has earned

graduate certificates from the Kodály Music Institute and the University of Maine. A sought-after leader in professional development, Adam presents regularly at local, state, and national education symposia and has been published in several print and online journals. In addition to his current position as an Instructional Designer for JAX Genomic Education, Adam is a virtual instructional coach for K-12 teachers and is also the editor of the Musician of the Month Project listening curriculum. A percussionist and composer, Adam lives in Somesville with his wife and two children.

Robbins, Dani

AD1065 Contemporary Dance Composition

Dani Robbins (they/them) is a Maine-based choreographer, educator, and organizer. They grew up training as a dancer and actor in central Massachusetts before receiving a Bachelors in dance performance from Bennington College in Vermont. Dani has shown solo and collaborative work throughout New England and Europe. Their most recent performance work, "PLAYFIGHT: unprofessional wrestling theater" premiered at the Reykjavik Fringe Festival in June of 2023. Dani teaches as adjunct faculty at College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor where they offer courses in dance composition, improvisation, anti-technique, and disability-related body politics. Dani is currently enrolled in the Interdisciplinary Disability Studies Graduate Program at UMaine. They are also a 2023 National Arts Strategies New England Creative Community Fellow and the co-founder of the Maine Dancemakers Collaborative, an organization that supports Maine-based dance artists in developing social praxis.

Rock, Jennifer

HS3138 Communicating Science

Dr Jenny Rock is a biologist with 20 years experience in field- and lab-based research, as well as an artist working in intaglio printmaking. She is a Sr Lecturer in Science and Society at the University of Otago (Dunedin, NZ), with interests in aesthetics of science, participatory practice, traditional ecological knowledge, sensory cognition and transdisciplinary 'ArtScience'. She serves as a technical advisor for the Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge in NZ, and as a thesis supervisor and visiting lecturer in Climate Change Communication for the Master of Resource Management: Coastal and Marine Management Programme, University of Akureyri, University Centre of the Westfjords, Iceland.

Sanborn, Kelley

ED3012 Supporting Students with Disabilities in the Reg. Classroom

Kelley Rush Sanborn has been an educator and school administrator for 34 years, working in public schools and residential treatment centers serving students with disabilities. She has taught at every grade level from preschool through college and served as the district's Director of Special Services for 17 years. Returning to classroom teaching in 2017, she is currently the lead teacher for the "SUN" Students with Unique Needs Program at Mount Desert Island High School, serving students with moderate to severe disabilities. Kelley has taught for the college since 2002, providing the "Serving Students with Disabilities in the Classroom" course required for teacher certification.

Titcomb , Anna

MD1037 Foundations of Human Nutrition

Anna is a registered dietitian and owner of Growing Wild Wellness with over 10 years of experience providing medical nutrition therapy. Specializing in chronic lifestyle disease prevention, sports nutrition, emotional and disordered eating, and plant-based nutrition, Anna takes an integrative, compassionate, client-centered approach, blending evidence-based research with holistic practices.