

2015 Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Education Recipients

2015 Faculty Awards Convocation

Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Education

This year WPI is pleased to present the Romeo Moruzzi Young Faculty Award to Professor Jim Cocola of the Humanities and Arts Department, for his innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to student engagement and success in the Humanities and Arts.

With his imaginative use of "Digital Humanities" Professor Cocola has made humanistic study at WPI more applied, real world, and engaging for his students. Rather than simply being a buzzword, in Jim's hands Digital Humanities represents the "gold standard" for the intersection of humanities and technology. Attuned to the technologies and media that appeal to students, Professor Cocola has integrated digital archives, hyperlinks, interactive assignments, and online forums in Inquiry Seminars and courses such as Film Studies to foster peer interaction and create critical learning communities. Several of Jim's colleagues, having witnessed his students' lively and well-informed dialogues, have been inspired to experiment with interactive digital tools as well.

Professor Cocola has also initiated projects in the Digital Humanities, finding opportunities for students to make a difference for local cultural organizations through their work in the humanities and arts. For example, in collaboration with the American Antiquarian Society one group of students used digital mapping techniques to analyze elections in Massachusetts in the late-19th century. Another developed an iPad app for the Knights! exhibit at the Worcester Art Museum. As in his course designs, Jim is showing how cutting-edge technologies can be used to expand and deepen students' understanding of historical and cultural questions. As noted by one student he introduced to this world, "I felt a newfound confidence in my scholarly abilities and a tremendous sense of accomplishment. Moreover, I saw firsthand the enormous benefits of interdisciplinary work in the digital fields."

For his passion and vision as an educator, his successes in bring novel ideas and methods to his pedagogy, and for his considerable contributions to student



engagement and impact in the Humanities and Arts, we are proud to present the 2015 Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Education to Professor Jim Cocola.