



# Washington State University

College of Education, Sport and Human Sciences

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Will defend their dissertation on

**REVISED Date & Time**

**Date: April 6, 2026**

**Time: 10:00 A.M.**

**Zoom: Link by request [ceshs.gradstudies@wsu.edu](mailto:ceshs.gradstudies@wsu.edu)**

*Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend*

Title:

## **OVERCOMING STIGMA THROUGH LITERACY: EVALUATING GRAPHIC NOVELS PORTRAYING TEENAGE GIRLS WITH ANXIETY**

Co-Chairs: Deanna Day-Wiff and Jessica Masterson

Abstract:

Many people in the United States lack knowledge and understanding of mental health, perpetuating stigmas, improper care, and reduced well-being. This critical content analysis examines three contemporary young adult graphic novels by women author-illustrators that feature teenage girls with anxiety. The textual and visual analyses focus on portrayals of the protagonists' anxiety symptoms, how they experience stigma and support, and how these experiences shape their outlooks. The theoretical framework guided the analysis through a critical lens informed by feminist psychiatric disability theory and the social-emotional learning (SEL) framework outlined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The study's findings identified multiple overarching themes related to anxiety, stigma, agency, and hope, as well as representations of CASEL SEL competencies. The implications offer teachers and librarians guidance for incorporating youth graphic novels into classrooms and libraries to foster SEL, improve mental health literacy, and help reduce stigma, potentially leading to better educational and life outcomes.

Keywords: Mental health, graphic novels, stigma, social-emotional learning, youth literature.