WHAT DO DIGITAL IDENTITIES, BASEBALL, SECULAR YOGA, VIDEO GAMES, AND BLUEPRINTS TO HEAVEN HAVE IN COMMON? They were all among the research and discussion topics presented April 26 in the MSU Museum Auditorium, during the Department of Religious Studies’ annual Undergraduate Scholars Conference (USC). As in years past, undergrads from MSU and neighboring universities were invited to present papers discussing religions, religious controversies, religious theory, and senior thesis topics. Held at the end of spring term, and organized by Dr. Benjamin Pollock of the MSU Department of Religious Studies, the 2013 USC showcased presentations by undergraduate scholars from three regional institutions: Kalamazoo College, MSU, and the University of Michigan.

“Our annual USC is an enjoyable and stimulating public event created to advance, support, and highlight undergraduate excellence in religious studies scholarship,” said Department of Religious Studies Chair Arthur Versluis. “It’s always a good forum for the students, and a great way for everyone in attendance to learn about a wide range of interesting subjects in a relatively short timeframe.”

An attendee at this year’s event agreed and added, “The undergrad students and the research presented were exceptional. The students were well prepared, informative, humorous where appropriate, and very entertaining. You could hear the excitement and engagement in the students’ voices and see it on their faces, especially when they were answering questions from the audience.”

2013 USC DETAILS
Bracketed by introductions and a conference wrap-up, the 2013 student presenters, schools represented, and presentation titles included:

**Allegra W. Smith** (MSU), “A Blog of One’s Own: The Changing Digital Identities of Mormon Women” (Note: Allegra is the 2013 MSU Undergraduate Commencement Speaker.)

**Andrew Johnson** (MSU), “Christianity and Gender Role Divisions in Southeast Asia”

**Yvonne Thoits** (Kalamazoo College), “The Nuances of Chil-ean Mormon Identity”

**Ian Harrison** (MSU), “Green Religious Themes in Video Games”


**Joseph Granzotto** (Kalamazoo College), “Sacred and Profane: Baseball and Religion in America”

**Anthony Hatinger** (MSU), “Critiques and Advancements of the Christian Ecological Crisis”

**Kimberley Pingatore** (MSU), “Searching for a Secular Yoga”


**Jamie Patton** (Kalamazoo College), “A Blueprint to Heaven: Mapping the New Life Church of Taipei”

**Zekiye Salman** (MSU), “Reinterpreting Biblical Narrative”