

The NJCU Psychology Society and Chapter of Psi Chi- International Honor Society in Psychology cordially invite all life-long learners to an inspirational exchange of ideas and practices!

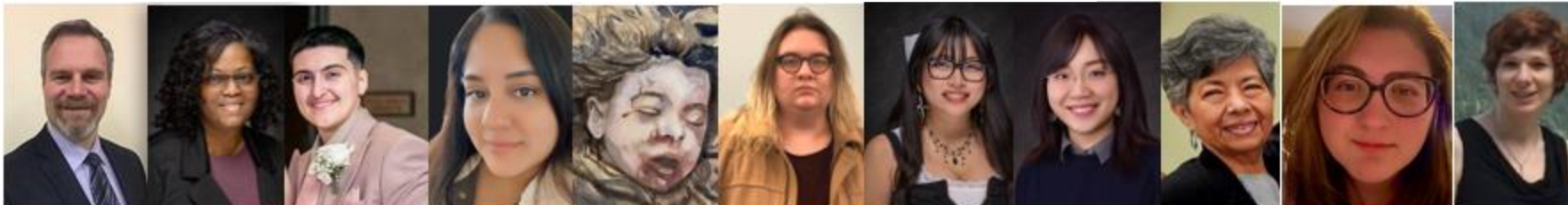


## **The 8th Annual NJCU Pedagogy Day:**

Innovative Minds, Connected Futures:  
Exploring AI, Art, and Advocacy for  
Mental Health

**Monday, April 14, 2025 | 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

**GSUB Multipurpose Room A**



*Organized by Dr. Peri Yuksel*

11:30am -11.40am

Opening Speech

# Scott Mittman

**Dr. Scott Mittman** is the Interim Dean, William J. Maxwell College of Arts and Sciences at NJCU. He received his Ph.D. and M.S. in Environmental Sciences from Rutgers University, New Jersey and his B.S. in Zoology from the University of Texas at Austin. Prior to NJCU, he served as Division Head and Professor at Essex County College and before that as Microbiology Subject Matter Expert at Columbia University Medical Center with an academic appointment as Research Scientist. Dr. Mittman has taught at all levels of the curriculum and produced a robust record of teaching and service. His research accomplishments and interests are in microbiology, sustainability and environmental sciences. Extracurricularly, Dr. Mittman serves as Vice President for the New Jersey Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability.



11:40am -12.00pm  
Keynote Speaker

## LaVise McCray

### “A Glimmer of Hope”

As retired Special Education Teacher and Jersey City native, Ms. **LaVise McCray** brings a remarkable story of resilience and advocacy. Following her diagnosis with End-Stage Renal Disease in 2015 and a lifesaving kidney transplant, she has become a dedicated advocate for organ and tissue donation. Currently pursuing a Psychology degree at NJCU, Ms. McCray also mentors and volunteers with organizations like the National Kidney Foundation and NJ Sharing Network. Join us for her inspiring keynote speech on perseverance, education, and community impact!





12.00-12.45pm

Panel: Role of Ai in Mental Health

# Nic Zapparrata

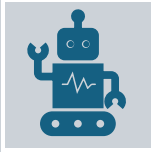
**Dr. Nic Zapparrata** is an Educational Psychologist with a specialization in quantitative methods and statistical modeling. Dr. Zapparrata's research concerns a variety of areas within both psychology and education, including information processing in neurodevelopmental disorders, educational outcomes in higher education, research in educational technology (EdTech) and assessment, and teaching statistical literacy. Dr. Zapparrata is passionate about exploring methods to promote student retention in higher education through accessible curriculum development.



# Overview: Exploring Ai in Mental Health & Education



Ai tools are being utilized in educational-contexts to support both student learning and student mental health.



Ai-supported digital mental health interventions may provide a scalable approach when addressing mental health outcomes.



The current panel will consider how educators can support and advocate for student mental health and the role that Ai plays in mental health interventions, and also in education.



We provide a speculative viewpoint of Ai, and consider how both students and educators can engage in fact-checking strategies when using Ai platforms.

## Focused questions to explore:

1. What are some practical ways educators and students can advocate for better mental health support at their institutions?
2. How do you balance sharing your own experiences with mental health while maintaining professional boundaries in your role as an aspiring life-long learner?
3. How do you stay informed about Ai advancements, and what are some simple ways educators can use Ai responsibly in the classroom and students for course assignments?

12.00–12.45pm

Panel: Role of Ai in Mental Health

## Ruth Abadie

**Ruth Abadie** is a recent NJCU alumna with a BA in Psychology, currently pursuing an MA in Industrial-Organizational Psychology at Saint Peter's University, NJ. Her expertise is in office management, organizational operations, team coordination, and customer service. Aspiring to be a leader in the field of Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Ruth is passionate about applying psychological principles to create inclusive and efficient workplaces that empower all employees to thrive.





12.00–12.45pm

**Panel: Role of Ai in Mental Health**

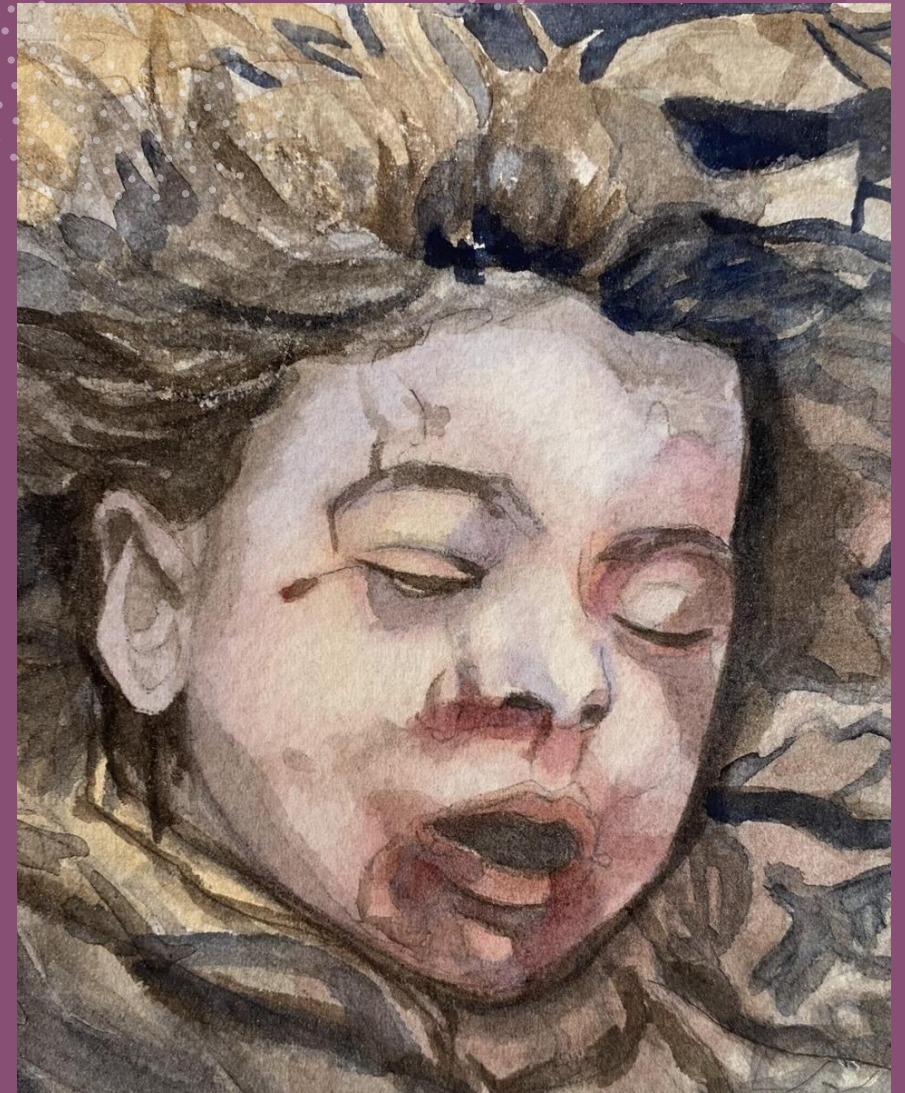
## **Weiwei Lo**

**Weiwei Lo** is an American painter based in Jersey City, specializing in figurative realism. She will receive her MFA from New Jersey City University in 2025. With a background in mathematics, programming, and information systems, Weiwei also has extensive experience in Chinese calligraphy and painting before transitioning to Western art.

Her recent work focuses on the “Children of Lesotho” and “Children of War” series—small watercolor portraits of disadvantaged children. The former is based on sketches and photographs she made while teaching in Lesotho, while the latter portrays war-affected children from news sources.

### **MFA Exhibition: Children On The Line**

This exhibition presents both series, reflecting on the fragility of childhood amid global conflict. Weiwei’s work not only evokes childhood memories but also serves as a poignant reminder of how innocence is eroded by the world’s chaos. She hopes to continue a meaningful artistic journey.



12.00-12.45pm

Panel: Role of Ai in Mental Health

## Jaelynn McGreivey

Jaelynn McGreivey is a senior Psychology major at NJCU minoring in Sexuality and Queer Studies. She intends to attend graduate school for mental health counseling and later specialize in counseling for queer and/or autistic young adults and adults.





12.45pm-1.30pm

Origami Workshop:

Connecting Community through Creativity

# Rachel Guanlao

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**Rachel Guanlao** graduated from NJCU with a degree in Psychology and Sociology in Fall 2024. She is joining us today to share her love for teaching others origami. To her, origami teaches the value of seeing the skills we build up cognitively being applied in a tactile way. It is a reminder to be mindful of the folds and change we may go through in life, but to not let it deter us from transforming ourselves simply from a piece of paper. It is a bonus that it is something beautiful that we can give to our loved ones as well.

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# 1.30–2.00pm PSI CHI INDUCTION

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Organized by Dr. Wei Zhang

New Jersey City University



Psychology Society

PSI CHI Chapter



New Jersey City University

NJCU | NEW JERSEY  
CITY UNIVERSITY

# Thank you!

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Mental Health



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**Pedagogy Planning Committee: Hilda Merchan, Mia Pepe, Wei Zhang, Peri Yuksel (chair)**