

# Loving (An)Other: Friendship in the Face of Scarcity and Competition

Friday, April 24, 2026 • 5 p.m.

College of Education, Room 164



## Vanessa Wills, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Philosophy at the George Washington University, author of *Marx's Ethical Vision*

**This event is free and open to the public.**

**A reception will follow.**

A 2025 survey by the American Psychological Association revealed that 54% of U.S. adults feel isolated. 50% of U.S. adults feel left out. And 69% felt that they hadn't received enough emotional support over the previous year.

While both social media and legacy media outlets speak of a "male loneliness epidemic," the reality is that both men and women are lonelier now than they used to be. The reasons why are many: soaring expenses, "hustle" culture and the resulting exhaustion, the lack of "third places" for socialization outside of home and work, and the continuing social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, to name a few. More and more of our scarce time and energy is dedicated to the struggle of surviving a hostile and unforgiving economic climate. Increasingly many aspects of life are conceived as a competition over scarce goods and opportunities. In these conditions, ethical values of empathy, human solidarity, and friendship might seem like luxuries that people in difficult circumstances can ill afford.

In this talk, **Vanessa Wills** will explain how painful, widespread isolation and loneliness are the predictable outcomes of a society based on scarcity and competition. Wills will go on to explain how friendship and connection could be normal and common in a society based on abundance and cooperation. Lastly, she will discuss how these observations should change the way we talk about loneliness and isolation in our present, imperfect world, and encourage us to rethink how willing we are to sacrifice friendship and connection rather than challenge the social and economic conditions which appear to render them disposable.