Baseline Blooms: A Poet’s Outreach Creates a Community Poem

What we do in English goes forth into the community in myriad ways, sometimes predictably (as in the required courses we teach) and sometimes, like pollen blown on a wind over the Valley, the “seeds” land and sprout. In the case of a poem written by Professor Alberto Alvaro Ríos at the invitation of an historic community in Phoenix: sometimes they even bloom.

This fall, a collectively written poem was unveiled. It was assembled in English, translated into Spanish by Ríos, and recorded in both languages as part of an outdoor art installation at the public library at South Mountain Community College. Ríos composed “Baseline Blooms” from the pastoral images, nostalgic memories, sweet thoughts, tweets, and poetry submitted by residents of the South Mountain community area of Phoenix. He constructed the poem from selected submissions in the tradition of the Japanese form called the renga or “linked elegance.” He specifically chose a Japanese traditional group poem in recognition of the community’s diverse heritage, with a special nod to everyone who remembers the Japanese flower gardens that were so ubiquitous in the area for many decades.

Ríos describes the excitement of the poem’s unveiling in late September:

On the Saturday morning celebration, a small crowd gathered outside the library. As I got to the lectern, I looked at the group. They were waiting for something, something good, and it would come. Before reading the poem I said I would introduce each one who had contributed to the poem, and they could come up and get their copy. As I started the introductions, everything went fine at first—and then a surprise. I called the fourth name, and a small boy came walking up to shake my hand. He had written work—I had no way of knowing this at the time—that had measured up to the best. Disney couldn’t have scripted this better, or so I thought. It was a wonderful moment, until what followed. The next name I called brought a woman forward who, she told me and told us all, was the little boy’s mother.

I went on to introduce the rest and then finally to read the poem. The poem was printed as a broadside, framed, and hung on permanent display on a wall of the library itself. It included everyone’s name. That means, of course, that this mother and son will always be able to come into that library and find their names on that wall.

The Ríos community poem is available online in both English and Spanish: www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org.

—THE EDITORS

Philosophy and art both render the invisible visible by imagination.
—GEORGE HENRY LEWES
Making Visible the Invisible

As one of our top priorities, we are working on “making visible the invisible”—articulating what we do for those outside of English studies. Last year, as the first step toward this goal, staff members Kristen LaRue and Bruce Matsunaga co-produced an award-winning video: ENGLISH: Start Here, Go Anywhere. From that film, we took the new department brand phrase and commissioned a visual identity.

We are taking a multi-pronged marketing approach: from hanging an eye-catching poster in the very busy and public Memorial Union, to branding print informational materials with it. I also use the phrase in my email signature.

This fall we partnered with the New York-based OpEd Project to host a unique training for faculty and staff. The day-long seminar taught us how to “think big” about our own research and stories so that we can have a meaningful impact on public conversation.

An example of our ability to have global impact is a recent ASU Research Matters piece that featured work by English faculty. “The Monsters Among Us” cited Cajsa Baldini and Paul Cook using literature to illustrate how monsters are reflections of collective fears. Strategically timed to publish just before Halloween, it was re-printed in ASU News, and then picked up and excerpted by the British Psychological Society on November 1, 2012, the day I’m writing this piece. We need more stories like this one.

Our motto “start here, go anywhere” captures the unique value of an ASU Tempe campus undergraduate or graduate English degree—one that can take you in any direction you want to travel. Our faculty are renowned internationally for their innovative research and teaching. Our goal is to educate citizens who can think, read, write, and act in robust and significant ways to meet new challenges.

The conversations occurring in newspapers, magazines, television, blogs, Facebook, and in the community demonstrate that scientists, historians, and scholars in other disciplines are masters at communicating their fields’ relevance to the wider world. We need to learn to do the same so that the next time we hear the oft-repeated phrase, “Oh English. Anybody can teach that!” We can say, “Well, let me tell you why English studies matter.”

—MAUREEN DALY GOGGIN

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Books by English Faculty and Staff


How do catastrophes, science, and the Romantic age go together?

“While Romanticism is often associated with successful political revolutions—in America and France—social revolutions, such as the elimination of the slave trade and the emergence of women’s rights, or aesthetic revolutions in poetry and painting, the age was also one defined by global war, economic disaster, and personal catastrophes for its leading proponents,” says Mark Lussier, Professor of English at Arizona State University.

“Catastrophes: The 2012 International Conference on Romanticism,” was held at ASU from Nov. 8-11. Lussier was co-organizer of the conference, along with Ron Broglio, ASU Associate Professor of English and Senior Sustainability Scientist in the Global Institute of Sustainability. The gathering explored the important connections between the Romantic Era’s darker aspects and endeavored to respond to them, with special emphasis on various scientific revolutions.

The European Romantic period, from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, is noted for revolutionary thinking about the individual’s place in the world, perceptions of nature and the role of imagination.

Among the conference activities was a free, public plenary session titled “Romantic Sciences: Crises and Resolutions” which drew nearly 150 attendees. Leading scholars Marilyn Gaull (The Editorial Institute at Boston University), Alan Richardson (Boston College), Ashton Nichols (Dickinson College), and ASU’s Lussier discussed the ground-breaking work that took place during the Romantic Age in a wide range of physical sciences, including astronomy, chemistry, life sciences, neuroscience, and ecology.

According to Lussier, “The emergence of what is now termed ecology, the birth of incipient theories of evolution, the articulation of ‘deep time’ in geology, or the expansion of the universe through technological innovations via more powerful telescopes . . . began a process that underwrites the modern and even contemporary views of scientific knowledge today.”

This is the second time that the International Conference on Romanticism has been held at ASU (the first was in 2006). The gathering, which attracted top scholars from across the globe, brought high visibility to the university’s achievements, including the national rankings of ASU doctoral programs. Hosting the conference at ASU provided an important opportunity for students to present their work and interact with these renowned scholars from various disciplines. An example of the fruit from such collaborations is the volume Engaged Romanticism: Romanticism as Praxis (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), a collection of papers from the 2006 conference co-edited by Lussier and Bruce Matsunaga, a staff member and a doctoral candidate in English at ASU.

Sponsors of the 2012 International Conference on Romanticism included the ASU Department of English, ASU Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, ASU Institute for Humanities Research, and ASU School of International Letters and Cultures (all units in the ASU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences); as well as the ASU New College and its Division of Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies; ASU Project Humanities; and John Arnold, Esq.

Although standing only five feet tall, Marilyn Gaull is a giant in her field, and her plenary talk on the "Sublime Romantic Sciences" scaled the heavens.

It wasn’t all doom and glooms at the “Catastrophes” Conference. Here, Associate Professor Ron Broglio, graduate student Sydney Linen, Lecturer Cajsa Baldini, and students from Mark Lussier’s English Romanticism class share a laugh at the conference registration table.

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RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT

“How Are Things in Reykjavík?”

In a year in which the Department of English’s mantra has been “start here, go anywhere,” Regents’ Professor Elly van Gelderen did just that, traveling to Iceland to deliver a linguistics paper entitled, “Psych-verbs in the History of English: The Diachrony of Argument Structure.” As van Gelderen explains, “Psych-verbs include ‘like,’ ‘please,’ ‘fear,’ ‘frighten,’ etc. The experiencer of the action (e.g. ‘me’ in ‘The book pleased me’) changes from object position to subject position. Thus, the meaning of ‘like,’ for instance, was ‘pleased’ and that of ‘fear’ was ‘frightened.’” And, van Gelderen adds, the unidirectional changes tell us “something about how verbs are represented in our mental lexicon.”

As it happens, van Gelderen attended the linguistics conference in Iceland in June, a time of year in which, that far north, the midnight sun shines luminously, dipping briefly below the horizon before rising again in what, for most, is the middle of the night. The conference organizers had the unique idea of holding the conference in two special locations across the country’s southern tier for reasons that became clear over the course of the week. The first two days of the conference were held in the capital, Reykjavik, where conference participants were treated to a tour of the medieval Edda and other manuscripts at Pjóðmenninagarðurinn (Culture House). Then a day of sightseeing allowed attendees the time to visit Pingvellir, the plain where the Alþingi (the first “parliament”) used to meet, beginning ca. 1,000 years ago. There, they also saw Geyser (the original geyser), and nearby, two of Iceland’s spectacular waterfalls, Selfoss and Urriðafoss. Finally, there were two more days of conference presentations—at the foot of Eyjafjallajökull, the volcano that erupted two years ago and where the dust still hasn’t settled. As van Gelderen puts it simply, “The conference was memorable!”

Memorable, too, was being offered whale and puffin as Icelandic delicacies (she demurred), eating harðfiskur (fish jerky), and learning an Icelandic joke (“There are so few trees in Iceland that if you find yourself lost in an Icelandic forest, just stand up”). She also visited a tomato greenhouse. “Icelanders want to buy tomatoes and cucumbers that are grown in Iceland,” van Gelderen notes. “I found the greenhouse fascinating because I had worked in the summer, when I was in high school and later, as a student, in Dutch tomato-growing greenhouses. The technology is very different now: electric carts move pickers, the plants are hanging like poor victims, and insects do the work of pesticides. I loved the taste of these tomatoes and smelling the plants.”

Some of van Gelderen’s favorite parts of Iceland, which she toured after the conference, were in the northern Westfjords around Hólavík. “Iceland prides itself on not having royalty and no palaces, but there is the issue of ‘the city’ versus ‘the country.’ The Westfjords definitely count as the latter and I talked to someone about that [dynamic] who was really furious at people from Reykjavík for their attitudes. I read Halldór [Kiljan] Laxness’ The Atom Station, which is really insightful on this for a much earlier period.”

—ANON

English Professor Awarded Faculty Teaching Honor

The ASU Alumni Association announced in December 2012 that Melissa Pritchard, fiction writer and Professor in the Department of English’s Creative Writing Program, had received the 2013 Founders Day Faculty Teaching Award. This academic year, the award was specific to faculty who deliver an educational experience that creates an impactful narrative regarding the military or national defense and contributes to the overall learning of students. The event will be celebrated at the Arizona Biltmore Resort on February 21, 2013.

Here’s a window on the back story: In January 2009, Pritchard arranged to be an embedded journalist in Afghanistan with a female Air Force unit doing community reconstruction and rebuilding in Panjshir Province. She flew into Bagram Air Force Base outside Kabul, and spent the next ten days traveling with and interviewing the members of the military unit to which she was assigned. The soldiers with whom she was embedded were not a combat unit, but doing what the U.S. and NATO forces had hoped would be community reconstruction in a safe province (Pritchard later recounted that her life had been in danger several times that she knew of).

Upon her return, she got to work, writing about these soldiers in ways that would make real their individuality and humanity, who would otherwise too often remain, for many American civilians, an abstract identity in a distant war. The assignment Pritchard accepted to Afghanistan was a kind of “Appointment in Samarra,” albeit not with death but with fate. Out of this “appointment” came lectures, prominent articles, and a fictionalized account of a military history that Pritchard discovered in her own family, which she included in her award-winning collection of stories, The Odditorium (Bellevue, 2012). In teaching and writing, Pritchard continues to impact students in Creative Writing in the Department of English as well as audiences far, far beyond.

—THE EDITORS
Tackling the Academic Job Market with Confidence: Doctoral Students Benefit from Placement Program

For newly minted PhD graduates, landing the tenure-track assistant professor job is an outcome “devoutly to be wished.” At a time when institutions report receiving nearly 300 applications for each advertised position, the search for professional employment causes anxiety even for the most intrepid academic job-seekers.

To aid English PhD students in navigating through the toughest academic job market since the mid-1990s, ASU’s Department of English initiated the Doctoral Placement Program in 2011. Helmed from the onset by Professor Deborah Clarke, and generously supported by English faculty volunteers, the placement program is designed to make ASU’s English graduates competitive in the employment market.

Representing the spectrum of English studies, a coalition of newly hired assistant professors and experienced job search committee members assists applicants in deciphering job advertisements, preparing dossier materials, and honing interview skills. Job-seekers and faculty meet on a semi-monthly basis to workshop application letters, curriculum vitae, and other documents. Typically, student materials are vetted by more than one committee member. PhD candidate Dale Pattison states that he usually leaves each session with useful “direct feedback and suggestions for revision” from four to six readers.

So far, student participation has not represented all who are applying for academic positions. Many PhD candidates work autonomously or rely exclusively on their committee members to comment on their job application materials. While committee response is invaluable, Clarke advises that job-seekers get feedback on their application files from those less familiar with the student’s work. “Ultimately,” Clarke states, “your file will be read by people who are not experts in your field; after all, if they were, they wouldn’t need to be hiring you.” The pedagogic practice of “the more eyes that read the work, the better it becomes,” is the committee’s assumed mantra.

For those PhD students looking at the job market down the road in the next year or two, Clarke has four salient suggestions: finish the work, the better it becomes,” is the committee’s assumed mantra.

As the magazine receives hundreds of submissions a month from writers around the world. It also maintains a blog featuring interviews with contributors and staff members, reviews of books by former contributors and unusual calls for submissions from other magazines. Most recently, Martone participated in an online roundtable discussion with editors at Indiana Review, Gulf Coast, Paper Darts and the Stinging Fly, covering such topics as cover letters, personalized rejection letters and odd writing habits.

Hayden’s Ferry Review Became Student-Run Publication

In the wake of its twenty-fifth anniversary and the departure of the managing editor of the last six years, Beth Staples, ASU’s premiere literary journal Hayden’s Ferry Review has made the transition into being an entirely student-run publication.

ASU’s MFA students have long served as genre editors for the magazine, selecting work by writers and artists, but now the magazine will see a new managing editor each year chosen from among the students. This year the position is being filled by Sam Martone, a second-year fiction writer in the program.

“It’s really a great honor to be chosen for this position,” Martone said. “Beth [Staples] left big shoes to fill, but she also left us with a beautiful magazine that has a stellar reputation among writers.”

The magazine receives hundreds of submissions a month from writers around the world. It also maintains a blog featuring interviews with contributors and staff members, reviews of books by former contributors and unusual calls for submissions from other magazines. Most recently, Martone participated in an online roundtable discussion with editors at Indiana Review, Gulf Coast, Paper Darts and the Stinging Fly, covering such topics as cover letters, personalized rejection letters and odd writing habits.

Hayden’s Ferry Review is an internationally distributed literary journal that, since its inception in 1986, has published fiction, nonfiction, poetry, translations, art and interviews by the likes of Haruki Murakami, Joseph Heller, Peggy Shumaker, Raymond Carver, Dianne Nelson, John Updike, TC Boyle, Rita Dove, George Saunders, Pam Houston, Lydia Davis, and Anne Valente, among many, many others. Last year, the staff celebrated the landmark twenty-fifth year by releasing a giant-sized fiftieth issue with a special theme: artifacts. Much of the work in the issue held to this theme, and it also featured special writing artifacts (i.e., draft notes, old photographs, etc.) from distinguished writers like Aimee Bender, Stanley Plumly, and Jim Shepherd.

Undergraduates interested in creative writing and literary journals can also get involved by interning for the magazine.

—THE EDITORS

english.clas.asu.edu
THE TEACHING ZONE

ASU English Launches PhD Concentration in English Education

The ASU Department of English is now proud to offer a PhD with a concentration in English Education, which will prepare students to assume leadership roles in the field of English education in universities, colleges, school districts, and state and federal departments of education. Areas for research toward the PhD include young adult literature, secondary reading and writing practices, new literacies, English language learning, and secondary English language arts curriculum and instruction development. Prospective students must have a minimum of three years of experience teaching in secondary language arts classrooms (or an equivalent). Included in the PhD work is the production of three publishable articles, preparing PhD candidates for professional and civic engagement.

The new PhD brings together an array of accomplished faculty. Director of the English Education Program, Jim Blasingame, has authored multiple books on young adult literature, and is still actively involved with “Books for Adolescents” (which he initiated) in the Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literacy. Blasingame’s research on teaching young adult literature is complemented by M. Beatriz Arias’s and Jessica Early’s locally embedded work on equal access and other educational issues among linguistically and ethnically diverse communities. Christina Saidy’s emphasis on preparing secondary students to write both for immediate and larger audiences in the community, and Laura Turchi’s explorations of virtual landscapes and the role that online and digital/video games can play in helping students connect to naturalists and other writers who make place matter. The new English Education PhD is poised to become a national leader in fostering high standards for innovation and sound practice among teachers of young Americans.

ON TEACHING: FACULTY MUSINGS

It isn’t exactly news that the Department of English is known for stellar teaching at every level, but what this section proposes is to offer a small space in which to stand back and consider what we mean when we honor, for example, “good” teaching. Is teaching an art, a skill, a bit of both? A range of faculty were sent a few questions: Is teaching an art to you? Is your teaching process intuitive or measured? What are your best practices? How do you reach students? What follows are excerpts from responses, which offer what might be called, following Dickinson, a window ajar upon a vast and flowering field.

Rosalynn Voaden said first that she thought of the section’s title, “The Teaching Zone,” as referring to the moment a “class comes alive. With such classes you know right away that things will zing.” In action in front of the class, “I am definitely intuitive,” she said, and added, “but that can only happen by being well prepared. Oh, and having a double espresso before class!” She noted the importance of being earnest, friendly, approachable (also irreverent and funny). Elly Van Gelderen wrote about the satisfaction she derives from helping students who had not made crucial connections in discussions about grammar and syntax arrive at “an Aha-moment!” when it all came together and made sense: “I love it when the class starts to see the generalizations that linguistic concepts enable them to make.” She described the key to her “perhaps art” as “excitement, knowledge, relevance.” For Norman Dubie, “Equal parts playfulness and solemnity in teaching characterize excellent teachers.” To the question of whether teaching is an art or a skill, he replied, “As long as you’ve got your balance (as humans we seem to be created for it) it is beauty in action.” Perhaps, then, art.

Finally, a brief tale of two teachers: Project Humanities was launched this fall with the viewing of a documentary film, Booker’s Place. The film tells the story of writing student Yvette Johnson, whose journey to “know” what happened to her grandfather in 1960s Mississippi began in a course entitled Family History Writing, taught by Sherry Rankins-Robertson, a Department of English PhD alumna (2011) and an online ASU instructor at the time (now professor at the University of Arkansas/ Little Rock). There is much more to tell about Johnson’s extraordinary journey from a writing course at ASU to being tapped by Hollywood for her story, then appearing on NBC’s Dateline (see Johnson’s blog: www.bookerwright.com). Robertson’s story is also—if differently—dramatic. When asked about the experience of teaching such a motivated student as Johnson, Robertson said simply, “I didn’t do anything different than I usually do. I provided exactly the kind of mentoring I received myself at ASU from English department faculty like Keith Miller. All my students are provided the same opportunities, the same offers of help during the course of the semester.” Robertson was quick to clarify that it was in working hard, making the most of opportunities offered to all students, that Johnson’s exceptionalism emerged: “Yvette did all the work. She followed through.” Robertson absolutely demurred when asked if her own role was a major factor in Johnson’s achievement. “No teacher should claim her student’s success as due to her!” she avowed. Along those lines, Norman Dubie mused: “You don’t teach for ego.”

—Anon

Start here, go anywhere.
The new bachelor’s certificate in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) potentially adds a marketable dimension to any degree, in the Department of English and beyond. According to TESOL instructor Ruby Macksoud, the teaching of English to speakers of other languages occurs in a wide range of contexts around the globe, including countries in which English is widely spoken (e.g., teaching English to immigrants or international students in the U.S. or Canada) and countries in which English is less widely spoken (e.g., teaching English to school children or business professionals in South Korea or Egypt). The boundary crossing value of the TESOL certificate is italicized by an interdepartmental partnership with the School of Politics and Global Studies, but anyone with appropriate prerequisites can apply. In its first semester, twenty-four students have enrolled.

Assistant Professor in linguistics Claire Renaud describes the certificate as “a way to formally acknowledge a coherent body of knowledge and group it with practical teaching experience.” The eighteen-credit certificate comprises twelve credit hours in required courses and six in electives. Study for the certificate culminates in a three-credit internship involving at least 125 hours of preparation and service. Macksoud, who coordinates the TESOL internships, delineates three kinds: teaching/tutoring, observing (watching others teach and writing up ethnographic notes), and developing materials and curricula. The internships currently serve four main purposes: (1) English for academic purposes (helping learners with study in a university or college), (2) English for vocational purposes (helping learners improve job-based or workplace English), (3) settlement/community English (helping immigrants and refugees adjust to a new country, working with them in community centers like the Salvation Army, the Sudanese Community Center, or the Somali Bantu Association), and (4) English as a foreign language (teaching English abroad, for example with the Akha Women’s Foundation in Thailand).

The TESOL certificate not only makes ASU graduates more marketable, but serves both locally and globally as an important outreach opportunity.

—CORNELIA WELLS

I remember the college class where I had my first intellectual cross-connection. During a required “Asian Religions” course (one I had approached with dread), I became so engrossed in the professor’s narration of a Hindu creation story that I lost track of time. When the bell rang, when I emerged from the spell of the tale, I had changed. I don’t remember specific details of that lecture, and I didn’t decide to major in philosophy or religion (I graduated in music). However, I did learn that a story is a powerful thing. I also realized that courses like these—that address topics across the human spectrum, take us out of our comfort zones, and expand our worldviews—are necessary for our complete education, no matter our disciplinary focus.

Fast-forward to July 30, 2012. With colleagues on the Department of English’s student academic success team—Linda Sullivan, Shauna Dranetz, Wes Jackson, and Michelle Laws—I attended a Project Humanities workshop titled “Humanities and Undergraduate Education.” Over one hundred undergraduate academic advisors, a dozen faculty, and several deans from myriad disciplines gathered for this working lunch.

The purpose: to build student awareness on the critical importance of general education courses, especially in the humanities. The organizers conceived of discussions on the following three questions:

1. What are your thoughts on the saying, “Humans need meaning, understanding and perspective as well as jobs?”
2. What makes humanities courses different from others?
3. What are the best ways of sharing the value of humanities with students?

This was a conversation on advising “best practices,” toward building a library of resources—talking points—for defending the humanities among skeptical students. These are the students who question, “Why do I need to take an English/history/culture course? I’m going to study accounting/engineering/computer science/business!”

Advisors are key in helping students navigate their ASU course maps and, ultimately, helping launch students into their post-ASU lives. According to Neal A. Lester, Professor of English and Associate Vice President in the Office of Knowledge Enterprise Development, the event was intended to help “demystify the humanities” for these critical personnel who are usually “on the frontlines.”

Lead English department advisor Linda Sullivan explained the importance of connecting with this intention: “As advisors, we have a unique opportunity to provide context to students to help them understand the ‘big picture’ of higher education . . . Helping them fit the pieces together and work intentionally toward degree completion is our greatest joy and most formidable challenge. Talking about and celebrating the humanities, as well as the other components of a broad liberal arts education, reminds us of what makes us, and them, human.”

Among the advisor-generated ideas for encouraging students to engage in general education courses were:

- Talk more with students about the value of their degrees than of their salaries.
- Ask students, “What can you take away from this class?”
- Work to create an eagerness to ‘see’ connections between disciplines.
- Point out that skills developed in humanities courses—critical thinking, written and verbal communication—are transferable.
- Remind students that “You are more than a job.”

With a good foundation in the humanities and liberal arts, students can indeed think more broadly about their educations, their future vocations, and even their everyday experiences.

—KRISTEN LARUE
**NEW FACULTY & STAFF**

**KATHLEEN HICKS :: Rhetoric and Composition [Online Pedagogy / Literature]**

Kathleen Hicks was promoted to Lecturer in the Department of English. Since completing her dissertation on John Steinbeck (ASU 2003), she has worked with the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies at San Jose State University, writing and editing teaching content for its online Steinbeck bibliographic database. The Center calls Hicks “the most significant leader of this effort.” She serves on the editorial board of The Steinbeck Review, and also does archival work for the Center. As Lecturer in English, Hicks teaches courses in both professional and academic writing as well as American literature. As the Writing Programs’ Coordinator for Online Education, she studies hybrid/online pedagogy for eLearning and credits her experience as an online student with a new perspective in online teaching. She also conducts a variety of English computing workshops for department faculty and staff.

Hicks is currently developing the Teachers Online Writing Network (TOWN), a professional development program for hybrid and online teachers in Writing Programs. It is an innovative site where ASU teachers may share pedagogical practices, resources, and assignments. “We hope it will eventually be a national hub for Writing Programs’ professional development networking sites,” Hicks says.

—SYDNEY LINES

**DANA TAIT :: Rhetoric and Composition [First-Year Composition]**

Lecturer Dana Tait has been in the Department of English since the beginning of her graduate studies, having begun teaching here after completing a PhD in 2007. Tait’s training is in nineteenth-century British literature, and her specific interests include the study of rhetoric within literature, John Keats, and aestheticism, the latter two of which informed her dissertation topic. Her latest project is Wiley-Blackwell’s Encyclopedia of Romantic Writers and Writing, forthcoming in 2013, which she co-wrote and co-edited with Mark Lussier. She thoroughly enjoyed this project because it increased her knowledge of Romanticism and steered her toward new areas of research. Fall 2012, Tait taught four ENG 101 hybrid classes, which she found challenging and satisfying. She looks forward to her ENG 218 class in Spring 2013, where she will include some discussion of nineteenth-century Gothic literature. Tait’s husband, Timothy, who recently received his EdD in organizational leadership from Grand Canyon University, credits his wife as inspiration for his decision to pursue a doctorate. Tait says that is one of the best compliments she’s ever received.

Aside from her academic interests, Tait is a recreational photographer and a practitioner of the fiber arts; she enjoys knitting, crocheting, weaving, and spinning.

—ABIGAIL OAKLEY

**BRADLEY IRISH :: Literature [Renaissance]**

Bradley Irish joined the Department of English as Assistant Professor in Renaissance studies. Irish received his PhD from the University of Texas at Austin in 2011, and has since distinguished himself with a strong publication record. His research extends the growing interest in understanding the emotional terrain of the Early Modern period. Although there has been much valuable work treating Renaissance theories of emotion and affect, Irish is concerned to see what can be learned by introducing into the discussion current models from sociology, psychology, and neuroscience. He describes the argument of his recent work as comprising a “poetics of emotion,” focusing especially on the earlier sixteenth century. This focus enables him to bridge the historical transition from the late medieval to early Renaissance periods, which richly complements the English department’s existing strengths. Irish has enjoyed sharing his “love of Tudor literature and culture” with students in English, where he hopes to “generate interest in theories of emotion and affect.” He looks forward to working with students on developing archival research skills, such as “Early Modern paleography.” The title of a forthcoming article in Studies in English Literature illustrates his investigation of the poetics as well as history of emotion: “Envy and Elegy: The Rivalrous Emotions in Surrey’s ‘So Crewell Prison.’”

—JENNIFER DOWNER

**JULIA HIMBERG :: Film and Media Studies [Critical Studies]**

Julia Himberg is an Assistant Professor in Film and Media Studies. She received her MA and PhD in Critical Studies at University of Southern California’s School of Cinematic Arts. Her dissertation, Producing Lesbianism: Television, Niche Marketing, and Sexuality in the 21st Century,” examined cultural, political, and economic dynamics at play in the production of contemporary lesbian TV images. Her project puts economic and political issues and ideas in conversation with cultural, social, and technological trends, exploring how lesbian TV texts and celebrities articulate and influence production and create images and iconography in the drastically altered post-network era. The production of early twenty-first-century lesbian TV representations, she contends, is defined by a state of ambivalence; it is a potential site for lesbian political self-recognition, but is also limited to a simplistic, consumerist identity politics.

Himberg was editor of “Race, Sexuality, & Television,” a special issue of Spectator: The USC Journal of Film and Television Criticism; her work on TV advertising has been published in The Hummer: Myths and Consumer Culture. She is an engaged activist/educator who hopes to make a difference in students’ lives; she has chosen the academic path largely because of passionate and supportive teachers. Himberg is currently finishing a book based on her dissertation.

—CYNTHIA SIMMONS
ELLEN JOHNSON :: Rhetoric and Composition [Theory / Writing]

Lecturer Ellen Johnson earned her MA and PhD in English at ASU, studying nineteenth-century American women's literature and eighteenth-century British material culture (specifically needlework in literature). Johnson appreciates the variety of literature and writing classes she teaches at ASU, and especially enjoys ENG 200 “Critical Reading and Writing About Literature” because she loves teaching theory. Since participating in trial runs of Blackboard while earning her MA, Johnson has remained very involved in online instruction at ASU. She teaches hybrid and online courses, and currently serves as a member of CIOT (Committee for the Innovation of Online Technology). Additionally, Johnson sews dresses for Dress a Girl Around the World, a Hope 4 Women International program, and works to involve others in this initiative as well. She remembers crafting and sewing with her mother and sisters, and loves how this passion not only inspired her academic pursuits, but also helps her help others. Johnson continues sewing as a personal hobby as well, and is especially thrilled to make cute clothes for her granddaughter.

—COURTNEY FOWLER

SHAUNA DRANETZ [Undergraduate Advising] :: Staff

Academic Success Specialist Shauna Dranetz finds that students in English often have high expectations of themselves and of their teachers; she is glad to help them reach their ambitious goals. Before ASU, Dranetz was an academic advisor at Everett University Online. Now she enjoys working with students face-to-face: “I love that students can leave my office not just with additional knowledge, but with a plan in place to accomplish whatever it is they want.”

ED FINN :: Digital Humanities [Science and the Imagination]

Assistant Professor Ed Finn joins the Department of English in addition to his appointment with the Herberger School of Arts, Media and Engineering. His research interests include contemporary literature, digital culture, science fiction, and new models for research, teaching, and outreach in higher education. He is also the Director of the ASU Center for Science and the Imagination which launched in September 2012.

Before graduate school, Finn was a journalist for Time, Slate and Popular Science. In 2011, he received his PhD in English and American Literature from Stanford University. His dissertation, “The Social Lives of Books,” explored the changing nature of reading in the digital era. His chapter, “Becoming Yourself: David Foster Wallace and the Afterlife of Reception,” is forthcoming in The Legacy of David Foster Wallace: Critical and Creative Assessments from University of Iowa Press.

Finn’s other new adventure this year is helping his wife parent their eight-month-old daughter. When he is not working, sleeping, or encouraging others to sleep, he enjoys travel, walking the dogs, and mourning that era when he had time to play video games. His blog: www.edfinn.net.

—SHEILA LUNA

MEGHAN BACINO :: Rhetoric and Composition [Critical Studies]

Lecturer Meghan Bacino joins ASU English from Michigan State University, where she earned her PhD in rhetoric and composition. Specializing in critical studies in literacy and pedagogy, Bacino is particularly interested in rhetorical genre studies. At ASU, Bacino teaches ENG 102 and ENG 217. She enjoys helping students “tap into their creativity and express their unique views” and loves those “unplanned moments” when students “really ‘run’ with a subject and surprise me with their enthusiasm.” Bacino especially likes teaching ENG 217 because she finds the “workshop-style atmosphere” fosters a “collaborative spirit” that inspires “students to push themselves with their own writing and creativity.” In addition to teaching, Bacino enjoys yoga, writing, painting, music, and anything creative. She sought a job in Arizona to be near family, and adores being an involved aunt.

—MEGHAN NESTEL
T

ewelve years ago, Founding Directors and English department alumni Sean Nevin (MFA 2002) and Chad Unrein (BA 1992; MFA 2002) launched the Young Writers Program (YWP), a K-12 community outreach project to expose young writers to the arts. Their aim: to make artists and their process visible to the community and to inspire youth to engage in their own creative acts. In Fall 2012, YWP’s current director, Salima Keegan, and the YWP joined the Department of English. With this addition to other English Education on-going community writing projects, the Department’s “reach” has been notably extended.

YWP aims to promote writing confidence, imagination, and communication skills in its participants. For the fourth year in a row, YWP has been selected as the Central Region Coordinator for the national recitation program, Poetry Out Loud, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Arizona Commission on the Arts. Thanks to this program, valley high school students have the opportunity to work with ASU English alumnus Myrlin Hepworth (BA 2011), a poet on the Arizona Commission on the Arts’ Artist Roster. Future plans are to enlist Master of Fine Arts students enrolled in ASU’s Creative Writing Program, as well. The artists visit Phoenix-area schools in three- to six-week poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction residencies to help students learn about and practice creative writing in fun and innovative ways. The students might not even realize they are learning key concepts measured by the state’s academic writing standards.

Director Keegan is not exactly a “new face” around the Department of English, as she has worked with ASU MFA students for over thirty years, primarily in her role of former managing editor of Hayden’s Ferry Review, ASU’s award-winning international literary and art magazine. She has been involved in YWP since its inception, and is eager to integrate its offerings into the Department’s many projects that make our work visible in the community.

—JAN KELLY

I

n Fall 2012, the Department of English spearheaded a transdisciplinary initiative to establish a graduate Certificate in Translation Studies (CTS) in professional and literary translation. The proposal includes the engagement of five ASU units: the Department of English; the Schools of International Letters and Cultures, Theatre and Film, and Transborder Studies; and the Master of Liberal Studies Program. The CTS proposal, scheduled for submission in January 2013, will offer students advanced training and mentorship in what is one of the most globally relevant fields in the twenty-first century.

In February, Richard Newhauser published a translation from the Latin of a thirteenth-century text, The Moral Treatise on the Eye by Peter of Limoges (PIMS, 2012), a work that combines the science of optics and moral theology. Newhauser characterizes the Treatise as a compilation of exempla, each prefaced by scientific information about optics on which a morality lesson and sermon might be built. One example: Peter of Limoges had studied the phenomena of refraction and reflection of light, which his Treatise uses to make the point that although we see in this world through a dark veil, as Paul said, in heaven we will see things directly. Among the facets of this work that attracted Newhauser was that it provided a discourse in which science and theology met within the same framework, taking high science out of the laboratory and into the lives of people in meaningful ways.

Newhauser has been selected to convene a symposium in the fall of 2013 at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (Williamstown, MA), “Science, Ethics, and the Transformations of Art in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries.” Newhauser’s translation—

The Department of English remembers a literary translator, Doris C. Powers (Professor Emerita), who died in October 2012. After retiring, Powers republished her co-translation of the Russian novel, Two Winters and Three Summers, by Fedor Abramov (1968; rpt. Ardis 1984). Professor Emeritus, and former Department Chair, Nick Salerno gives us a real sense of who she was in the department: “elegant,” “old school without being aloof,” “a lady—and proud of it,” admired for her “wicked” sense of humor. No coincidence, then, that in addition to her interest in literary translation, she published a well-received monograph on Augustan satire.

The over flowing of the poem comprises a series of poetics commentary on each of these poems. Hogue was fascinated by this collaboration between poet and philosopher, which is both an investigation of the lyric genre and also a postmodern take on an ancient argument between poetry and philosophy.

—ANON

I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman.

—VIRGINIA WOOLF “ANON”

Start here, go anywhere.
IN MEMORIAM

O M “Skip” Brack, Jr. (1938–2012)

EREMEMBERING A MAN OF BOOKS AND LETTERS

My English department office is across the corridor from what used to be Skip’s. We were “hallway friends,” stopping to chat about books and family on occasion. Over the years, we were also on several department committees together. I always appreciated Skip’s candor and sense of humor; that he was an accomplished scholar I took for granted.

Skip was an avid collector of antiquarian books. In 2007, the Homecoming Committee engaged him as an on-site expert and invited game-day attendees to bring their vintage books for appraisal. I’m not sure if any football fans showed up with their old tomes, but Skip was there, in English department t-shirt, always a good sport.

I gave birth to my first daughter, Maggie, in December 2007. In anticipation of her birth, and when Skip was cleaning out his office upon retirement, he generously gave me stacks of children’s books that had been his son’s. These books form the basis of a very lovely collection, many classics, some unique (brought back from the family’s time in England), and all dear to us. Reading is Maggie’s greatest fun.

After his retirement, Skip survived cancer and endured months of radiation and chemotherapy. Several other complications resulted from this illness and aggressive treatment. He hardly stopped working, resuming his regular research trips to the Huntington Library in California as soon as he could. He said, “I am happy to be here”—meaning: alive. “I just ignore the pain.”

For at least three years, Skip and I have been planning to meet for lunch, and I was to “bring the baby along.” Each fall, I received a beautiful or silly postcard, mailed from the Huntington Library, promising this meeting: “I look forward to seeing you and Mag” and “Let’s pick a Saturday before my dance card is filled” and “How about La Grande Orange?” I now have two more children (twins, aged seven months as of this writing). Our lunch plans never did come to fruition.

My daughter Maggie is now almost five. Last night, when I told her that my friend Skip, the man who gave her many of her special books had died, her face briefly crumpled. She recovered quickly, as four-year-olds do, but we talked on and off during the evening about how special this gift, this man, was. Then we read a book.

—Kristen LaRue, November 14, 2012

INVEST IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Your gift to the Arizona State University Department of English represents an investment in the university’s success today—and in the future. Funds will be deposited with the ASU Foundation, a separate non-profit organization that exists to advance ASU as a New American University to support the Department of English. In addition, many employers match gifts made by their employees, multiplying the impact of your gift. Department of English strategic initiatives include the Ortiz/Labriola Speaker Series, the Glendon and Kathryn Swarthout Awards in Writing, the English Department General Fund, English Department Scholarships, the English International Graduate Student Book Scholarship, Film and Media Studies Scholarships, and the Lambert Memorial Rare Book Fund. You may also designate a program of your choice or give in honor of a loved one. To give, please use the link below. If you are interested in speaking to someone about giving opportunities please contact Bill Kavan, ’92 at 480.965.7546 or bill.kavan@asu.edu. We thank you for your generous support.

www.asufoundation.org/english

Maureen Daly Goggin, Chair
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH COMING EVENTS

January 31, 2013 | Lecture by David Scott-Macnab, University of Johannesburg: “The Many Manifestations of the Satanic Hunter in Medieval English Literature.” Language and Literature 316 (LL 316) ASU, Tempe campus, 4:30 p.m.

February 9, 2013 | ASU Composition Conference. ASU, Tempe campus, time TBA.

February 14, 2013 | MFA Faculty Public Reading. Memorial Union Pima Auditorium (MU 230) ASU, Tempe campus, 7:30 p.m.


February 15-16, 2013 | “-isms, -ologies, and -istics: Conversations Across the Disciplines” 18th Southwest English Symposium. ASU, Tempe campus, time TBA.

February 25, 2013 | Lecture by James Mitchell, Linguist, Salve Regina University. FMS Speaker Series. Social Sciences (SS) 109, ASU, Tempe campus, 3-4:15 p.m.

March 1, 2013 | 19th Annual Linguistics/TESOL Symposium. Memorial Union (MU) ASU, Tempe campus, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

March 2, 2013 | Night of the Open Door. ASU, Tempe campus, 4-9 p.m.

March 21, 2013 | Lecture by James Luna, Performance Artist, Pauma Valley, CA. Simon Ortiz and Labriola Center Lecture on Indigenous Land, Culture, and Community. Heard Museum (2301 N. Central Ave.) Phoenix, 7 p.m.

March 29, 2013 | Prison Education Conference. University Club (UCLUB) ASU, Tempe campus, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

“THIS LIVE-OAK, literally all that was left of a New Orleans neighborhood flooded during Hurricane Katrina and razed in the following year, is the very image of the poet’s tree in Walt Whitman’s “I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing,” which stood alone “uttering joyous / leaves of dark green.”

Read the full poem online at the Walt Whitman Archive: www.whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1867/poems/37

“...The place where Deborah’s house stood before Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 2008.” Archival pigment print. © 2008 Rebecca Ross.