

The Reavis Newsletter

Volume 46, Issue 1, Winter 2012

Department of English Northern Illinois University

From the Chair

Phil Eubanks

The Department is extraordinarily active—so active that I have to limit myself just to listing the books published in 2011!

John Bradley, *Transluminatio* (Lowbrow)

Philip Eubanks, *Metaphor and Writing: Figurative Thought in the Discourse of Written Communication* (Cambridge University Press)

Thomas McCann (and co-authors), *Teaching Students to Write Personal Narratives, Teaching Students to Write Comparison/Contrast Essays, Teaching Students to Write Fiction Narratives, and Teaching Students to Write Arguments* (Heinemann)

Amy Newman, *Dear Editor: Poems* (Persea), winner of the Lexi Rudnitsky Editor's Choice Award

Kathleen Renk, *Magic, Science, and Empire: The Alchemical Literary Imagination* (Routledge)

John Schaeffer, trans., *Giambattista Vico's Universal Law*, 2 vols. (Edwin Mellen)

Mark Van Wienen, *American Socialist Triptych: The Literary-Political Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Upton Sinclair, and W. E. B. Du Bois* (University of Michigan Press)

First-Year Composition Engages Its Students

The English Department's First-Year Composition Program is leading the way when it comes to student engagement. FYComp Director Michael Day explains, "Students tend to write better when they engage with real audiences and purposes and share their writing publicly. So we provide as many opportunities as we can for students to discuss their writing with classmates, test it out in public occasions such as the Showcase of Student Writing, publish it in texts such as *Y1 Writes* and *Contemporary Voices*, and submit it for honors such as the Mae Thomas, Maude Uhland, and Jan Kiergaard awards."

Showcase of Student Writing

Each spring, FYComp sponsors the Showcase of Student Writing. The Showcase allows hundreds of students to share their work in a public forum. Students collaborate on a visual

William "Bil" Johnson Retires

When Dr. William Johnson arrived at NIU in 1969, Neil Armstrong had just completed the first-ever moonwalk, and half a million college-aged music lovers had recently decamped from a small concert in Woodstock, New York. A mere forty-two years later, he concluded that it was time for the next phase of his life.

In his very productive career, Johnson published *Spenser's Amoretti: Analogies of Love* (Bucknell 1990), along with numerous scholarly articles and book reviews. He was also the subject of *Learning from Scant Beginnings: English Professor Expertise*, a book-length study of Johnson's teaching practices (Knapp, Delaware 2008).

Johnson also worked (and continues to work) tirelessly as the Executive Director of Sigma Tau Delta (International English Honor Society). Under his 30 years of leadership, it has grown from 200 to 1200 chapters.

In September, a group of well-wishers gathered to congratulate him on his retirement, to

chuckle at the mention of his famed "cards of doom" (his patented technique for encouraging student participation) and to recall his years of teaching the "red-eye Milton," his signature 8:00 a.m. class.

Johnson remarked that his friendships with "some remarkably talented, devoted,

dedicated colleagues" kept him at NIU longer than the three years he had originally planned. Perhaps his most poignant words were about his students, whom he will miss.

"I have participated in their journeys and they in mine," he said. "Some of these students have become not only lifelong learners but lifelong friends, sharing with me the absolute joy I found (and still find) in the unfolding of a fine poem, or the development of one's own sense

of being through the analysis of a great play, or showering in cascades of words as used by great prose writers. Knowing that in some small ways I touched students' lives, and that they will touch the lives of others, is incredibly important to me."



Indeed, as 2011 *CV's* editor-in-chief Suzanne Coffield notes, "Our students see their lives in the stories, recognize the power of words, and want to find their own writing published in the upcoming edition. Not only is *CV* a showcase for our talented young writers, but it is also a terrific teaching tool."

Y1 Writes

Edited by a team of graduate students, *Y1 Writes* is the newest component of FYComp's student engagement. *Y1 Writes* solicits submissions from students in composition courses and awards cash prizes to the first, second, and third place entries.

The collection has been greeted with rave reviews. This year's editor-in-chief, Andrea Fryling, says, "Many instructors assign readings that apply to class topics. They discuss the essays' content and the writing itself. Students also use the essays as models."

Contemporary Voices

Now in its twenty-sixth edition, *Contemporary Voices*, a collection of narratives written by NIU students, is at the center of writing courses for CHANCE students. "Although we complement *CV* with a variety of professional texts, no text has ever engaged our writers as deeply," says Michael Day.

English Awards and Scholarships: Spring 2011

We are grateful to our donors for making these awards and scholarships possible. To contribute to any award or scholarship—or to the Department's general foundation fund, please send checks to Northern Illinois University Foundation, Altgeld Hall 135, DeKalb, Illinois 60115-2882 or visit their website at <http://www.niufoundation.org/>.

Queen Victoria Hardison Award for excellence in tutoring in the Writers' Workshop (CHANCE students): Sassalee Tate

Mae Thomas Award for first-year composition writing in Communication Skills classes: Nicole Schweizer, Natalie Albavera, Shondell D. Coleman, Brendon Rahman, Citlali Ventura

Maude Uhland Award for critical first-year composition writing: Elizabeth Howard, Sarah Allen, Dominique Roberts

Jan Kiergaard Award for Excellence in First-Year Composition, ESL classes: Krista Ziolkko, Amy Carr, Maksym Lagutin

Y 1 Writes Award (best writers in ENGL 103, 104, and 105): Taylor Dupre, Kenneth Witz, Dakota Foss

Showcase Award for Excellence in First-Year Composition: Damani Brown, Michael Cabalero, Londyn McNeal, Paula Rosales, Ashley Cronin, Jay Fucilla, Marissa Portell, Matt Torres, Jack Picuch, Taylor Sligar, Chris Wiedmaier

Director's Outstanding Graduate Assistant Award for Excellence in Teaching First-Year Composition: Christopher Blankenship

Graduate Director's Award for Exemplary Contribution to the Program: Susan Jardine

Robert T. Self Award in Literature and Film: Michelle Faler, Lindsay Massie

Arnold B. Fox Award for graduate research writing: Daniel Shank Cruz, Emily Kingery

(Fall 2010), Clare Foland, Alisa Smith-Riel (Spring 2011)

Orville Baker Essay Award for undergraduate upper-division essay writing: Amber Bell

Patricia L. Francis Award for service to the Department of English: Angie Dybas

Jenefer M. Giannasi Award for excellence in teaching first-year composition: Laura Bird

Robert T. Self Scholarship for summer study in Ireland: Ashley Michels

Orville and Adra Baker Scholarship for returning undergraduate English majors: Lisa Lynch

Russell & Jeanne Durning Family Endowment for summer study in Oxford, England: Beth McFarland-Wilson

John C. and Judith M. Gurley Endowed English Scholarship for English majors pursuing degrees in a professional field: Nora Lindvall

Charles W. Hagelman Scholarship Endowment for summer study in Oxford, England: Djuana Davis, Donna High, ReAnne Palmer

Rosalie Hewitt Scholarship in English: Nora Lindvall

David and Linda Nelson Endowed Scholarship in English for teacher certification students in their student-teaching semester: Megan Nelson (Spring 2011), Sarah Pfrommer (Fall 2011)

Gustaaf Van Cromphout Dissertation Support Scholarship: Anthony DiSanto

Lynne Waldeland Scholarship in English for new undergraduates who declare English as a major: Trevor Nelson

In Memoriam

The Rev. Arra M. Garab (Ph.D., Columbia University 1962) died on August 22, 2011, in Rockford, Illinois. He taught British literature full time at NIU from 1966 to 1995 and taught in retirement through 2003. He was the author of the well-regarded *Beyond Byzantium: The Last Phase of Yeats's Career* (NIU Press 1969).

Charles Fierz (Ph.D 1998) passed away on February 26, 2011, in DeKalb, Illinois.

Christine Hamilton (B.A. 1956, Certificate of Advanced Study 1972) died on September 14, 2011, in DeKalb, Illinois.

Marcia Harper (Ph.D 1988) passed away March 29, 2011, in North Carolina.

Ellen Franklin Honored

In fall 2011, Ellen Franklin received the CLAS Distinguished Faculty and Staff Award. She has served as Assistant to the Director of First-Year Composition since 1992.



She has played a key role in developing and ensuring the quality of composition courses for CHANCE students, has helped to create electronic portfolio assessment in First-Year Composition, and for 25 years has edited *Contemporary Voices* (see page 1).

Joe Bonomo Joins Professorial Faculty

In the fall of 2011, the Department of English welcomed Joe Bonomo (Ph.D. 1994, Ohio University) to the professorial faculty. Before joining the professorial faculty, he taught in the Department for more than a decade as an Instructor. Indeed, semester after semester, students enthusiastically praised his signature course in creative nonfiction.

"I'm attracted to creative nonfiction—personal essays, memoir, and autobiography—because of the nearly infinite possibilities of the forms," says Bonomo. "When essaying the self, a writer has to move from the private—the writer's wholly unique, unvoiced experience—to the personal—an essaying of the human condition, through narrative, intimacy, candor—and attempt to make of himself a 'person,' a silhouette of the human condition, wherein he or she becomes emblematically human. That's the goal of art, it seems to me, and autobiographical writing poses its own challenges, limitations, and opportunities. To plug students into that tradition is exciting and valuable in a liberal arts education."



"I'm excited every day to teach," he says, "to challenge students to engage texts that argue against preconceptions or expectations they might have, to immerse them in work that dramatizes the human condition. I wake up some mornings and can't believe that I get to teach Sei Shonagon, Virginia Woolf, and Jeffrey Eugenides, sometimes all in the same day."

Bonomo is the author of *Sweat: The Story of The Fleshtones, America's Garage Band* (Continuum 2007) and *Jerry Lee Lewis: Lost and Found* (Continuum 2009). His most recent book is *AC/DC's Highway to Hell* (Continuum 2010). Next year, the University Press of Mississippi will publish Bonomo's *Conversations with Greil Marcus*. He has also published poetry and essays. And he is always updating his blog (www.nosuchthingaswas.com).

Melissa Adams-Campbell Joins the Department

Melissa Adams-Campbell (Ph.D. 2009, Indiana University), joined the Department in the fall of 2011 as an assistant professor. She brings with her a passion both for teaching and for American literature and its trans-Atlantic connections. She has taught at Indiana University, Knox College, the University of Chicago, and Ball State University. She is especially pleased to come to NIU. "As a first generation college student and a longtime Midwesterner, I am delighted to be a Huskie," she says.



Teaching has always been her dream.

She explains, "My favorite childhood pastimes were reading and playing school. I was always the teacher, of course. I'm sure my

family never imagined that my well-used library card and my penchant for playing school would lead me here, but I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

Indeed, "playing school" has led her to a career that, in her eyes, can have a far-reaching influence on the lives of her students. "Teaching is an opportunity to share with my students how to become empathetic, tolerant global citizens," she says. "A careful study of literature changes the world for the better by deepening our respect for others and expanding our willingness and capacity to understand others."

In her scholarship, Adams-Campbell focuses on gender roles and marriage expectations in the New World, concentrating on representations of indigenous, biracial, black, and white colonial women in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She has written about early American women's captivity narratives and about novelist Leonora Sansay's representations of women in Haiti during the Haitian Revolution. Her current book project argues that evidence of alternative gender behaviors and marriage rules from the Americas troubled both the content and form of early novels.

Alumni Doings

We welcome news about our alumni. Please let us know what you are doing!

1950s

Richard D. Jones (B.A. 1952) of San Diego founded the Kensington Book Club, which has read 12 books annually since 1988. He is a retired anthropologist and has a 100-year-old avocado tree.

Roger Margason (B.A. 1958) of Chicago is working on his 17th book under the pen name Dorien Grey (www.doriengrey.com).

1960s

Joe Gahan (B.E. 1969), retired teacher and businessman, published *A Midwestern Medley: Poems, Stories, and Expressions that Venerate Our Lives*. He lives in McHenry, IL, with his wife of 50 years.

Gloria Golec (B.A. 1969) received a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Emory University and is Professor of English at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, IL.

1970s

Victoria (Vicki) Everitt (B.A. 1975, M.S.Ed. 1985) retired after 33 years of teaching English language, literature, and composition at Downers Grove North HS. She lives in Michigan City, IN, and volunteers with local community theatres and the humane society.

Denise Rode (B.A. 1972, Ed.D. 1990) of DeKalb, IL, was named an "Outstanding First-Year Advocate" by the National Resource Center of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (Univ. of SC). She is Director of NIU's Orientation and First-Year Experience.

Sara Tompson (B.A. 1979), with Lorri Zipperer, contributed a chapter to the new *Best Practices for Corporate Libraries* titled "Systems Thinking for Success."

1980s

Janet Heller (taught at NIU, 1982-1986) of Portage, MI, published *Traffic Stop*, a book of poetry (Finishing Line). She is the author of *How the Moon Regained Her Shape* (Sylvan Dell 2006) and more.

1990s

David Krusell (B.A. 1989, M.A. 1991) of Taos, NM, wrote and recorded with his wife, Mary Simonini, "She Cries Behind Her Veil" (I-Tunes, CDBaby). He is a retired elementary school teacher.

Robert Rebenstorf (M.A. 1991) of Oswego, IL, has taught for 26 years at Marmion Academy. He was recently promoted to English Department Chair.

Nina Cosentino Burkert (B.A. 1992, J.D. 2002) formed Cosentino Law Firm, LLC, in

2004 with her brothers, Blake and Christian; offices in DeKalb, St. Charles, and Chicago.

Matt Golosinski (M.A. 1992), after 12 years at Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management, is now Research Director at INSEAD (Paris). He and his wife recently celebrated their 8th wedding anniversary and their daughter's 2nd birthday.

William McCoy (B.A. 1992) is the Director of NIU's BELIEF Program, which promotes "core ethical values and moral courage" in the classroom and the business world.

Laura (LeMar) Kjoson (M.A. 1994) of Highlands Ranch, CO, published two short stories: "Mist" in *Sounds of the Night* and "Spirit of the White Owl" in *Dante's Heart*. She teaches literature at Arapahoe CC.

Gene Tanta (B.A. 1997) received an MFA at the Iowa Writer's Workshop in 2000 and a Ph.D in English at the Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2009. He is the author of the book of poetry *Unusual Woods* (BlazeVOX) and is art director for *Mad Hatter's Review*.

Katharine Villegas (B.A. 1997) of Arlington Heights, IL, is a Technical Assistant at URS Corporation in Chicago. She and her husband, Abraham, recently celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary. She is learning to play the acoustic guitar.

Joshua Robnett (B.A. 1999) is studying at the Roger Williams Law School. He has served in the U.S. Army, worked for *Recreation Resources Magazine* and the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, and taught junior high English. He and his wife, Rachel, have a beautiful and creative daughter, Sophia.

2000s

Keith Schultz (B.A. 2002) of Naperville, IL, celebrated his third successful year of operations for www.FantasyQuestions.com, a website dedicated to fantasy sports. He was also appointed Operations Manager for Goodwill Industries of Southeast Wisconsin.

Kelli Lyon Johnson (Ph.D. 2003) received a CLAS 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award. She is Associate Professor at Miami University Hamilton.

Rebecca Ward Klein (M.A. 2004) and her husband, Adam, would like to announce the birth of their second child, Logan Alexander. Logan joins his big sister, Olivia.

Patrick Dunn (Ph.D. 2005) published his first book of poetry, *Second Person* (Finishing Line), which won the Marilyn Houghton Kayton Founders Prize. He is Assistant Professor of English at Aurora University.



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