



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2017-2018

Distinguished Alumni Award Winners Carol Clarke and Mark Hellner

By John Moody

The Department of English at Illinois State University hosted its annual ceremony during Homecoming Week honoring two alumni with the Distinguished Alumni Award. Honored were Carol Clarke, vice president of Academic Affairs at The Mico University College in Kingston, Jamaica; and Mark Hellner, executive director of the Center for Disability & Elder Law in Chicago.



This is the fourth year for the ceremony, which was held October 22, 2017, in the Founders Suite at Bone Student Center.

“The Department of English at ISU is fortunate indeed to count among its alumni such distinguished citizens of the world as Carol Clarke and Mark Hellner,” Professor Christopher De Santis, department chair, said of the two honorees. “Professor Clarke and Mr. Hellner have excelled in careers that demonstrate part of the range of possibilities that a degree in English can open up to students, and both have used their educations to make a positive difference for the many people whose lives they influence through their expertise.”

Carol Clarke

For Carol Clarke, Ph.D. '00, coming to this far-off and sometimes frozen land to study was a big decision for a native of Jamaica.

“At first I had no clue as to where to study, but I knew I wanted to be somewhere where I could write,” Clarke said. “The Fulbright program coordinator assisted in the selection, and ISU was chosen because of its writing program.”

Clarke has been in her current position since 2008. She has oversight of all programs, including graduate, undergraduate, and short courses. Previously, she spent a decade in the classroom as a teacher. She then became a teacher-educator, followed by six years as a department head.

Receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award, she said, is “really a wonderful endorsement” and “validation of my years of work and dedication to teacher education.” She added that it is also a proud moment for her family.

Her time at Illinois State made her more purposeful, she said, and brought more balance

Message from the chair

By Christopher De Santis, chair,
Department of English

As I near my 20-year anniversary of working in the Department of English at ISU, I'm filled with pride, gratitude, and not an insignificant amount of awe for our talented students, brilliant faculty, dedicated



Department Chair
Chris De Santis

administration and staff, and a University that continues to defy the odds among state institutions and thrive despite ever-weakening financial support for public higher education. As it was when I was compelled to relocate from Massachusetts to

Illinois in 1999, the Department of English at ISU remains a unique community of faculty, staff, students, and alumni committed to an English Studies model of our profession. While English departments nationwide tend to encourage students to focus on specializations within the major, we also promote an integration of language, literary, and writing study, assisting in the development of strong teachers and scholars who can draw, as needed, on multiple perspectives to analyze contexts and create new knowledge. As a faculty, we are deeply committed to the notion that research and teaching are fundamentally interrelated, that strong teaching depends on bringing new knowledge into the classroom, and we have been recognized nationally for our success in pursuing a model of the discipline that often diverges from more traditional English departments.

The English Studies model that we embrace as a department was initially defined by forward-thinking faculty members who realized that children's

literature, composition, creative writing, English education, linguistics, literary and cultural studies, publishing and textual studies, technical communication, rhetoric, TESOL, and emerging areas in the broad discipline could not only co-exist in a single department, but could flourish given a shared commitment to innovative pedagogies. While we productively revise what we mean by English Studies as we grow and change as teachers, scholars, and students, we can be confident that the effectiveness of what is happening in the Department of English at ISU does not go unrecognized by others on campus and in the wider world.

Indeed, our undergraduate English and English Education majors are among the finest in the University. Active in organizations such as the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, the Rhetoric Society of America, and the English Studies Association, they are also frequent recipients of the Robert G. Bone Scholarship, the highest University-wide honor earned by undergraduate students. Our graduate students, too, bring a great deal of pride to the Department of English. Already active in their fields, they enhance the reputation of Illinois State University each time they publish an article, poem, or story, win a major grant, or present their innovative research and pedagogical strategies at national conferences. Alumni of our graduate and undergraduate programs, too, bring recognition to our department as leaders or emerging leaders throughout the world in their service as teachers, scholars, publishers, technical writers, judges, poets and novelists, fundraisers, cultural theorists, political consultants, actors, academic administrators, and many other professions. Alumni help shape the future of our department through their service on the English Studies Alumni Advisory Board, and they enable undergraduate and graduate scholarships, faculty research and teaching support, and the flourishing of a truly vibrant academic community at ISU through their gener-

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Christopher C. De Santis, chair
Libby Lind, office manager
Jenn Coletta, editorial assistant

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to her creative writing and her academic/scholarly work.

“Being at ISU sharpened my poetic sensibilities, especially working with Dr. Lucia Getsi on *The Spoon River Review* as manuscript reader,” Clarke said. “The ISU experience enabled me to contribute significantly to writing courses for programs in literature and language locally and abroad.”

She called ISU the place that “jump started” her professional development.

“Immediately on return (to Jamaica) from my studies, I was promoted to principal lecturer,” she said. “Within two years, I was promoted again” to head of the language department.

She also cited her studies at ISU for making her promotion to associate professor of English a reality. She said many of her teachers here made an impact on her life, and she was amazed at the personal interest they took in her development, especially compared to Jamaica.

“I’m from a culture where there is a professional distance between student and teacher,” she said. “I felt more like a peer/colleague than a student. Drs. Getsi and (John) Shields especially went the proverbial extra mile to challenge me, keep me focused, and add an exciting dimension to my research and scholarship.”

And now, years later, Clarke knows what it’s like to be the teacher helping the student.

“It is always a pleasure to be reminded how I’ve impacted the lives of students,” she said. “Many of them have become successful in areas such as education, law, health, aviation, politics, and business. But my pride and joy is to see my students who have turned out to be successful writers, both academic and creative.”

Clarke believes her time ISU played a role in her 2011 award from the Book Industry Association of Jamaica for “Best Text Book at the Secondary Level” for her text, *Carlong English B for CSEC*.

One of her proudest moments, she said, was being named interim president for The Mico University College, the first woman so named in the institution’s 181 years.

Mark Hellner

Mark Hellner ’73 is an attorney; he’s in the business of helping people in need. A Springfield native from a modest background himself, his public school education continued here at Illinois State.

“I had a great public education,” Hellner said. “And, ISU gave me a little more confidence and furthered my interest in the world.”

Hellner has never forgotten his working-class roots, but it was as an undergrad at ISU that he learned to expand his thinking.

“ISU taught me not to put my bricks on my head,” he said. “Nobody in my neighborhood had a parent who went to college. ISU helped me learn that outside expectations were something you could ignore.”

Through Tom Eimmermann, former professor and retired chair of the Department of Politics and Government, Hellner’s connection to the University remained strong as a member of the pre-law committee for several years.

Hellner has worked in private practice, in a corporate setting, and for the state at the Department of Revenue as general counsel and ethics officer. In addition, he has served as adjunct professor of law at the University of Illinois College of Law. Since 2012, he has worked full-time at the Center for Disability & Elder Law, becoming its executive director two years ago.

“We offer free legal service for low-income seniors and adults with disabilities,” he said. “We use a lot of volunteer attorneys.”

Hellner was a serious student in his undergraduate days and was a member of the Honors Program all eight of his semesters. He was on the Dean’s List seven semesters and was a Robert G. Bone Scholar, in addition to earning a graduate-level interdisciplinary fellowship in English and political science. He was also chair of University Forum, which brought prominent speakers, including world leaders, to campus from around the globe and “may have artificially raised my profile,” he said in typically understated fashion.

He had the opportunity to work for people on campus who influenced him greatly, including a couple of presidents in David Berlo and Gene Budig. He also was an assistant to Charles E. Morris, mathematics professor and secretary of the University. And, he had a his-

tory professor, Ted Sands, then head of the Honors Program, who made a lasting impression.

With all that, he was surprised to be honored by his old department.

“My first reaction was deep surprise, and what did I do to deserve this?” Hellner said, adding that he felt humility. “I really don’t feel like a distinguished alum. I’ve tried to help people as best as I can.”

This award from his alma mater inspires him to keep up the good fight.

“I had a blessed life at ISU, and this makes me rededicated to helping people,” Hellner said. “Secondly, I want to pay it forward.”

And, so he has. One of his proudest moments came recently when his organization represented a Chicago-area family facing eviction from their home of 20 years after spending their savings on medical bills after their son was paralyzed in a diving accident.

The litigation lasted nearly three years and involved hundreds of hours of free legal work, but through media coverage, crowdfunding, and the generosity of strangers, the family prevailed.

“They got their house back debt-free on their 32nd wedding anniversary,” Hellner said proudly.

@Salon 2017: Gwendolyn Brooks Centennial

In March 2017, the McLean County Arts Center hosted ISU’s @Salon 2017—Gwendolyn Brooks Centennial, an interdisciplinary event that includes conversation, poetry, music, and visual art. The McLean County Arts Center opened this event to the public in an attempt to garner an even greater audience for art, as well as extend the impact of the work into the



community. In addition to featuring renowned local and regional artists, @Salon includes presentations and discussions of works-in-progress for our graduate students. The host of the event was Duriel Harris, ISU creative writing professor and editor of the journal *Obsidian: Literature and Arts in the African Diaspora*.

Many were in attendance, and ISU’s English Department was well represented by our graduate students. In a collaborative effort, many showed up to volunteer their time as DJ, bartenders, ushers, etc. This event allows our students to showcase their work while also serving the local arts community. Doctoral students Michelle C. Wright and Sanam

Shahmiri presented their works-in-progress—an opportunity that grants graduate students a chance to present their work to, and receive feedback from, a wider range of people than would normally be possible. @Salon uses Liz Lerman’s celebrated method for critical responses to works-in-progress: the artist offers a work-in-progress for review and is prepared to question that work in a dialogue with others; responders, committed to the artist’s intent to make excellent work, offer reactions to the work in a dialogue with the artist; and the facilitator initiates each step, keeps the process on track, and works to help the artist and responders use the process to frame useful questions and responses.

The salon program also presented readings by National Book Award winner and Chicago-based poet Daniel Borzutzky. Having the honor to host such a celebrated poet speaks highly of the event, as well as ISU and its curators; indeed, Borzutzky’s performance bolstered attendance and will likely ensure excitement for events in the future. The lineup also included a special guest poet/performance from the host, Professor Duriel Harris, for the Illinois launch of her latest book and Nightboat Poetry Prize winner *No Dictionary of a Living Tongue*. Highlighting the legacy of Illinois Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks, the event also launched Downstate Legacies’ release of the late Professor Elizabeth Hatmaker’s *Infrastructures* and featured a sound art exhibition and musical selections by DJ 1st Mind and actor/composer Duane Boutte. Included in the release of *Infrastructures* was a touching memorial to Professor Hatmaker. Her husband, Professor Chris Breu, and Steve Halle, director of the publications unit, as well as current and former students including



ous philanthropy. Finally, our outstanding faculty, some of whose work is featured in this newsletter, deserve credit for making the Department of English at ISU extraordinary. Dedicated teachers who truly care about effective pedagogy, our faculty are also leading researchers and writers whose publications in the various areas of the discipline create, shape, and expand knowledge about English Studies throughout the world.

Graduate Student Research and Service

Graduate Students Conquer Conferences: Shelby Ragan and Britni Williams on Running Undergraduate and Graduate ISU Conferences

During the 2016-17 school year, graduate students in the Department of English organized two conferences, both of which were held during the spring semester. First, officers of the Lambda Delta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta English



honor society, Graduate President Shelby Ragan and Vice President Britni Marie Williams, organized the seventh annual English Studies at Large Undergraduate Conference. The conference, held February 11 in Stevenson Hall, aims to give undergraduate English students the opportunity and experience of presenting their original work in a professional setting. Fifteen students presented their work on six panels throughout the day. In addition to first-time and returning presenters from ISU, students from Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, presented papers. The theme for the 2017 conference was “relationships,” and presentations addressed all manner of relationships, both literal and metaphorical, related to language and literature. Professor Ricardo Cruz and recent Ph.D. graduate Evan Nave (pictured) gave the keynote address, “Intersectional Hip-Hopping: Making Room for Freestyle and the Elements of Creative Writing,” which explored the relationships among their

creative, critical, and collaborative work. The English Studies at Large Conference (ESAL) is sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta, the Department of English, and the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Society of English Graduate Scholars (SEGS), formerly Word's Worth, organized its annual conference, The Central Illinois Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference. The goal of the conference is to provide a venue for graduate students to practice presentation skills, receive feedback on their scholarship, and engage in additional professional development activities. SEGS spent the fall and spring semesters fundraising more than \$1,500 to make the conference free for presenters and attendees. Members participated in a bake sale at the Downtown Bloomington Farmers Market, sold Yankee Candles, and hosted a fundraiser at Jason's Deli. SEGS was also sponsored in part by the Department of English, the writing program at ISU, and the College of Arts and Sciences. The two-day conference, held on March 24 and 25, took place in Stevenson Hall. This year's theme was "The In-Between," and Professor Sonali Thakkar of The University of Chicago gave the keynote address. There were 15 student panels, two workshops, and two roundtable sessions throughout the two-day conference. Students from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Arizona, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Puerto Rico, and the United Kingdom traveled to ISU to present their research, fulfilling this year's Executive Board's goal of expanding the reach of the conference.

ESAL

Shelby Ragan, Co-Director
Britni Marie Williams, Co-Director

SEGS E-Board

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Laurel Perez, Amish Trivedi, Jeff Higgins, Francesco Levato, and Laura Skokan, read excerpts from her book as a tribute.

@Salon was made possible by many sponsors, including *Obsidian: Literature and Arts in the African Diaspora*, Illinois Arts Council Agency, McLean County Arts Center, ISU's Department of English and creative writing program, ISU's women's and gender studies program, ISU's ethnic studies program, ISU's international studies program, and the LGBT/Queer Studies and Services Institute.

Because of its commitment to art and community, @Salon's showcase serves as a seminal event for graduate students in the English department, as well as professors and community members.

Undergraduate spotlight

Holly Buescher, 2017 Bone Scholar

Holly Buescher has known that she wanted to become an English teacher before she even knew where she wanted to attend school. After becoming a Bone Scholar recipient, it is clear that ISU was a good choice to help her on her way. In a way, Buescher has been working toward becoming a Bone scholarship recipient since she was a freshman, as applying for the



award required her to elaborate on influential course work, provide a list of activities and organizations she is a part of on campus and in the community, share and critique a sample of her writing, and explain what she feels are important issues in the field of English education, her chosen major. All of her experiences, in the classroom and out, have contributed to her success at ISU. Along with maintaining a perfect 4.0 GPA, she is very active on campus. In past semesters, she served as vice president of the German Club and a teaching assistant for an educational psychology course. Currently, she is a member of the ISU chapter of SEA (the student branch of Illinois' teacher's union), a voting member on the *Vidette's* Publication Board, a writer with *HerCampus*, and co-president of ISU's chapter

of Sigma Tau Delta, an international English honor society. Her dedication to her studies and her activity on campus, along with the support of her professors in the Department of English have culminated in a career at ISU that has better prepared her for her future as a high school English teacher. Buescher is incredibly grateful to have received a total of seven scholarships from the Department of English. Without the encouragement of her professors, especially Professor Robert McLaughlin, she would not have seized all of these opportunities for leadership and recognition. Importantly, she feels as though the Department of English at ISU has equipped her with the resources and content knowledge she needs as she moves forward in her career. Buescher has taken an internship with U-High, ISU's laboratory school. This fall she will be working at U-High as a teacher's assistant in the Department of English, as well as taking a full course load at ISU. In the spring, she will be student teaching before she goes on to hopefully become a high school English teacher.

Maddie Blackwell, 2017 Bone Scholar

My name is Maddie Blackwell, and I am a senior English education major at Illinois State University. I am both a Presidential Scholar and member of Sigma Tau Delta. This past spring, I also received the Robert G. Bone Scholarship, the highest honor an undergraduate at Illinois State can achieve, making this the most recent and most noteworthy of my accolades. Although I have consistently undertaken a variety of academic challenges, both prior to and during my time at Illinois State, the Bone Scholarship tested my intellectual mettle in an unprecedented manner. Luckily, as an English education major, I was primed for this experience by my rigorous course work, and I was supported throughout the process by devoted faculty. Between a rich study-abroad experience in London, an eye-opening semester as a research assistant, and plentiful opportunities to contribute to Illinois State's community of creative writers, I gained the persistence, aptitude, and breadth of experience needed to complete this challenge.

It was, however, the Department of English's emphasis on the importance of our words and thoughts in the midst of a changing world that truly enabled me to earn this honor. Much of the Bone Scholarship's components ask applicants to reflect on important experiences from the past, acknowledge their current place as a thriving student at Illinois State, and look forward to contemporary issues in their discipline. Therefore, the mental timeline established by my experiences in the Department of English allowed me to fulfill these requirements thoughtfully. For example, I gained historical insight in my courses by understanding the words of the past and their influence on the present; I learned the virtue of reflection by exploring how the present can provide a lens through which to view the past; and I ruminated on how the future can be touched by the words of the present. By treating my thoughts with gravity and urgency, this department has shaped me into a better student, a better educator, and a better candidate for the Bone Scholarship.



As my personal academic Mount Everest, the Bone Scholarship represents dedication, hard work, and the special euphoria that results from completing a difficult task. Despite how demanding components of this scholarship were, the weeks of writing, revising, and compiling references have all been worth it. Representing English education to the school at large, as well as representing Illinois State University to the community, has been an incredibly meaningful experience that I now cherish.

Faculty Research

Our Judgment has Consequences: Professor Bob Broad on the Power of Ethical Writing Assessment

Professor Bob Broad is celebrating his 23rd anniversary with Illinois State University's English department this fall. Broad earned his Ph.D. in English from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and has dedicated his research to understanding and enhancing the ways we assess writing. He specializes in several areas, including rhetoric and composition; rhetorical, literary, and social theories; and interpretive and qualitative research methodologies, but he sees a particular need in the area of assessment, with which he actively engages. Broad works



to ensure fair and quality assessment, all the while empowering students to have agency over their learning. He explains his passion, in part, is because "writing assessment powerfully drives and shapes the teaching and learning of writing. It is a terrain of struggle between those committed to rhetorical pedagogical values and those committed to the pursuit of profit under the cloak of scientism and objectivism. Also, writing assessment appears to be the dimension of English studies about which the general public cares the most, since it often carries with it consequences that the public (rightly or wrongly) consider more serious and substantive than some of the other concerns of English studies."

In his new co-authored book, *We Need to Talk: A New Method for Evaluating Poetry*, Broad and his co-author, Michael Theune from Illinois Wesleyan University, acknowledge how often we evaluate poetry, be it as workshop leaders, competition judges, or journal editors. They propose a new method for evaluating poetry that values transparency and integrity. He also has a new chapter in the edited collection, *Reflections on Qualitative Research in Language and Literacy Education* entitled "So Many Data, So Much Time: Living with Grounded Theory in a Rhetorical Autoethnography." Here, he describes how methodological hope and faith are key strategies for carrying out qualitative research, which can be a lengthy and lonely discipline. He also recently published "This is Not Only a Test: Exploring Structured Ethical Blindness in the Testing Industry" in the *Journal of Writing Assessment*. In that piece, Broad examines two testing corporations' commitment—or lack thereof—to ethical and educational practices, and focuses specifically on the phenomenon of "structured ethical blindness." Ever committed to what is in a student's best interest, he concludes that "testing

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Mitigating Borders

Francesco Levato on Conceptual Appropriation and the Postcolonial Deject

Creative Writing Ph.D. Francesco Levato's ethno-material poetics is a conceptual and creative approach which looks at the way text as material is used in a physical structure that is rhetorically situated in certain types of politics. After writing the book *War Rug*, Levato began to turn his attention even more to forming his ethics of appropriation. Being concerned with the appropriation of bodies via the appropriation of the traumatic text, Levato's poetics wishes against the reinvention of trauma through the performative appropriation of state and other political documents—especially ones involving the (no-longer) existence of corporeal beings. Though he is very interested in reconceptualizing the performative nature of the document (and thinking very specifically about the production of autopsies in this regard), Levato warns against the kind of Kenneth Goldsmith-esque absolution of ethical responsibility. Unlike Goldsmith, whose performance of "The Body of Michael Brown" sought no ethical or conceptual merit, Levato's new materialist and conceptualist endeavors remain wholly aware of the politics of their somatic trauma(s).



SunStruck Magazine, a digital new media journal with an international range and political lens, has published three pieces from Levato's latest work: "Priority 1 (threats to national security, border security, and public safety)," "Levels of Behavior/Resistance," and "from Hand-Held Stun Gun for Incapacitating a Human Target." These works explore Levato's poetics of ethno-materialism by looking at the ways in which the materiality of texts constructs U.S. and Latin American policies. Through immigration acts and the language of customs and border patrol literatures, Levato's poetry enacts a revealing method for witnessing how these peculiar texts manifest and take governance over "certain bodies." Much of Levato's poetry shows the manner in which these bodies are defined by the conceptualisms of the text, and how that text is then inscribed on those bodies through the material of restricted physicality. Levato poignantly

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extrapolates how bodies are defined by and through the document which also constitutes the full range of possible methods of resistance that a body may perform. Similarly, the way the document orients the physical mobility of bodies also inscribes an a priori consequence on those bodies which precedes the very nature of that body through the legality of its designation.

Essentially what Levato's work is concerned with is the way an entire populace is constructed vis-a-vis the document. In "Priority 1," the document is the primary material of borders as it governs both state institutions and larger national governments. Here the border acts to establish the citizen, to designate and excise the non-citizen, and to initialize the state of abjection in its total reign over the subjectivities of its people. Looking at these effects through the lens of postcolonialism, Levato pays particular attention to the abject citizen: the body that finds its homeland is unnavigable—the very body itself is unnavigable due to the restricting terrain of the state document. In the abject citizen Levato finds an important turn in the performance of postcolonial and paracolonial states of being. For an abject citizen who willingly and conscientiously exiles themselves from the dominant culture, they can find a greater power and sense of mobility by which they will be able to critique the nation state's preying on their poor and disenfranchised citizens. In this turn, the abject citizen becomes the deject citizen—a citizen that chooses the downthrow of their positioning within the state apparatus and uses the force of their liminality to mitigate the borders that bind them.

With more and more work forthcoming from Levato, his work in ethno-materialism will surely make a significant contribution to the field of poetics and the geopolitical conversation at large. A chapbook of Levato's recent work, *A Continuum of Force*, was published by Moria Books/Locono Chaps in January 2017. *A Continuum of Force* is part of a larger documentary poetics project that examines the criminalization of Latin American bodies through U.S. policy.

In fall 2017, Levato joined the faculty of California State University San Marcos as an assistant professor of Literature and Writing Studies, specializing in digital literature, digital poetics, and critical/cultural theory.

corporations cannot fairly or realistically be expected to run their businesses with careful attention to the educational consequences of their products. Their unavoidable self-interest prevents them from seeing those consequences clearly." Thus, in this article, he proposes "federal regulation and oversight as the only apparently functional mechanism by which to counterbalance testing corporations' pursuits of private profit with the U.S. public's right and responsibility to protect the quality of students' educations."

Throughout his many publications, presentations, and teaching, Broad continually advocates for his—and indeed, everyone's—students. He maintains innovative pedagogical practices through which he actively decenters the traditional classroom roles and instead opens the door to encourage students to participate fully in their own learning experiences. He earned the Outstanding Faculty Member award from the students in Sigma Tau Delta, the English honor society, just last year. Broad exemplifies the best of what the ISU English department has to offer, both in his teaching and his research, by putting forth theories and creating learning environments in which students thrive.

The Ethics of Reading and Writing: Professor Mary Jeanette Moran on the Intersection of Children's Literature with Ethics and Gender

Professor Mary Jeanette Moran came to children's literature (everything from picture books to YA texts) as a side interest while doing her graduate work on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British novels. Since starting her first job at CUNY-Staten Island, where she was the only children's literature specialist on staff, her focus on children's literature has expanded;



now, when she thinks about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature, she uses a foundation of children's literature studies, rather than the other way around. Her work explores the relationships among narrative practices, ideas about gender, and ethical paradigms, and one of the reasons that she has been increasingly drawn to study children's literature is that the texts provide rich opportunities to consider these intersections. Moreover, built into the field of children's literature is a consideration of how texts affect their audiences, resulting in an emphasis on interrelationality that parallels recent developments in the fields of feminist ethics and narrative ethics

Moran's research tends to center around three subgenres: "family stories"—*Little Women* is a classic example; newer versions include Jeanne Birdsall's Penderwicks novels and Rita Williams-Garcia's *One Crazy Summer*—girls' mystery series such as the Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton books, and speculative fictions like fantasy and dystopian novels. Working on the Judy Bolton series has been especially fun for Moran. She explains that the books are lesser known than the Nancy Drew series, but they hold an interesting place in the history of series fiction; while Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, and other series were written by a number of different authors using the same pseudonym, the Judy Bolton series was written by one author, Margaret Sutton, from 1932 to 1967. Moran notes, "As ISU's Dr. Sally Parry has argued, the Bolton series is in many ways more progressive than Nancy Drew, and I think these texts deserve more critical attention." Currently, she is working to weave her recent conference presentations on speculative fiction and feminist ethics into a book proposal. The project will investigate the ways that emotion has been used to denigrate both care-based ethics and children, and the issue of whether novels present a culture of death (in which, for example, risking one's life or dying for something or someone is the ultimate way to show value) or a culture that values giving life over courting death.

The topics of Moran's research lead naturally to an interest in social justice and activism, and she has explored these links through pedagogy workshops at ISU's Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. This summer she participated in a workshop on reframing a course with principles of civic engagement in mind. One of Moran's long-term goals is to integrate some projects on the scholarship of teaching and learning, particularly on student engagement, into her research agenda.

Professor Cynthia Huff on the Power of Pedagogy, Life Writing, and Animalography

Cynthia Huff came to ISU in 1989 as director of the women's studies program and a tenure-track faculty member in the English Department, where she taught courses in women and literature and conducted extensive research about women's writing. That research, some of which stemmed from work done during a Fulbright Research Grant in Great Britain, resulted



in numerous presentations, book chapters, and articles on many topics, including Victorian diary keeping, women writing about childbirth, and how to read and teach archival material. After her first book, *British Women's Diaries* (1985), she published a ground-breaking study on women's diary writing in 1996, *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries* co-edited with Suzanne Bunkers, which helped transform autobiography studies, women's studies, and how scholars look at women's writing across disciplines. In 1995, she became a full-time English Department faculty member, a move that allowed her to work more individually with both undergraduate and graduate students

inside the classroom and on their specific projects, such as in-class honors, undergraduate theses, Master's theses, and Ph.D. dissertations.

She has found this one-on-one work especially fulfilling and invigorating and has forged strong bonds with her many students, domestically and internationally. In the 28 years she has been at ISU, she has taught 29 different classes ranging from her innovative approach to Introduction to English Studies, where she engages students in conducting primary research at local archives, to the general education class, Women's Literature in a Global Context, and the graduate-only course, Feminist Literary Theories, both of which she proposed as additions to the curriculum and both of which continue to enjoy high interest and successful enrollments. She is very proud to have nurtured and mentored many English studies Ph.D. students through the lengthy process of earning a doctorate and to have served as graduate director. Since many of her Ph.D. students are international students and many focus on the expanding field of autobiography/life writing studies, she has helped them navigate professional commitments, including publication opportunities, by arranging transportation to and introductions at national and international conferences. In Victorian studies, too, she has helped graduate students navigate professional waters and make their mark. She is especially pleased how many of her students have become significant scholar-teachers. In 2015, she received the department's Graduate Mentoring award for her extensive work with graduate students.

That same year she became the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Researcher. Although her 2005 book, *Women's Life Writing and Imagined Communities*, continued her earlier research trajectory of focusing on women's autobiographical writing, recently she has "gone to the dogs" by writing about animalographies, autobiographies purportedly written by animals. Her current research projects combine both her interests as one involves presenting an invited keynote address in Warsaw, Poland, this November highlighting archival Victorian life writing while the other is co-editing a special issue of *alb: Auto/Biography Studies* on the theoretical interdisciplinary contributions of feminist and science scholar Donna Haraway to life writing/narrative studies.

Mismatching Language and Discovering Irony: Professor Susan Burt and Sociopragmatics

Professor Susan Burt is a highly valued member of the linguistics team in ISU's English department. She uses the term "sociopragmatics" to describe her research interests; that is, the overlap between sociolinguistics (the study of language variation) and pragmatics (the study of usage, and of speakers' choices among linguistic options). What she looks for is the ambiguity in the meta-messages we send when we make a linguistic choice, and the irony of having a linguistic choice interpreted in the way we did not intend. For example, her early research, after her dissertation (which was on Japanese), was about



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The Ideology of Children's Literature

Tharini Viswanath on the Conceptual Conditioning of Young Adult Texts

Tharini Viswanath, a fourth year Ph.D. student in English Studies/Children's Literature, focuses her research on the figure of the sexualized adolescent girl,



bringing together theories of discursivity and material feminism. In both her scholarship and pedagogy, she aims to destabilize some of the recurring and reductive tropes regarding gender and sexuality in children's literature. Viswanath is currently teaching ENG 125: Literary Narrative, a general education course taken by many ISU students. Titled Embodiment of Gender and Sexuality in Children's and Young Adult Literature, Viswanath's section of this course aims to help students critically analyze books written for a juvenile audience. In this course, Viswanath asks her students to critically read and analyze texts and media in order to identify gender-based ideologies imbedded in texts and discuss how these ideologies perpetuate and inform their construction of gender roles and non-traditional sexualities.

In fall 2015, Viswanath published a review of the scholar Christine Seifert's recent book, *Virginity in Young Adult Literature After Twilight*, in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, a prestigious journal in the field of children's literature. In the review, Viswanath outlines Seifert's argument on the fetishization of female virginity in young adult novels and how virginity has become a literary trope that readers grasp onto as an idealized state for female characters. Viswanath examines Seifert's reading of Bella from the *Twilight* series and explores the ways in which women in society have been configured and have configured themselves in the pattern of the prototypical virgin, who is as docile and acquiescent as she is desirable. In these characterizations, Viswanath summarizes Seifert's main argument: that abstinence in the more "progressive" young adult romance novels is eroticized, and the reader is called upon to participate in this eroticization of virginity.

Faculty Awards

Creative Activity Initiative Award: Congratulations, Professor Joe Amato!

Joe Amato is this year's recipient of the Creative Activity Initiative Award. This award is intended to recognize faculty members who have demonstrated promising creative productivity. Amato



fits this bill, as he has published 10 books—three with academic presses, one with an internationally-renowned translation press, and six with small presses—with a novel under contract and a novella under review. He's also

co-authored five screenplays, four of which have been recognized by the most prestigious screenwriting competitions, including the Nicholl Fellowships screenplay competition, hosted by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and the Austin Film Festival screenplay competition.

Doubtless owing to Amato's background in engineering, his writing often reveals the importance of details, patterns, symbols, and (re)design. His work attempts to blur the boundaries between critical and creative, prose and poetry, autobiographical fact and fiction. While he started out as a poet, he has in recent years migrated to memoir, fiction, and screenwriting. *Samuel Taylor's Last Night*, Amato's newest novel, received reviews in *The New York Times Book Review*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *Inside Higher Ed*.

Outstanding College Researcher Award: Congratulations, Professor Chris Breu!

"Research and scholarly activity serve as catalysts for growth within our community and bring national and international attention to Illinois State University. This year's recipients of the Outstanding College Researcher Awards are excellent examples of the important and innovative research being conducted by our faculty," CAS Dean Gregory Simpson said. One recipient is selected from each of the college's three divisions—the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences/mathematics.

Breu joined the Illinois State University faculty in 2000. His scholarly record is notable for its theoretical acumen and broad thematic consistency. Central to his research are questions of materiality

choosing a language for intercultural interaction. Burt explains, "If I meet a German or Austrian person here in Central Illinois, it would be nice and friendly and welcoming of me to speak German to them, right? Wrong! While I might intend to convey friendliness and welcome with my language choice, my German-speaking new acquaintance may be thinking to herself, 'Is my English that bad that she has to speak German to me?' or 'Hey, I bought a plane ticket to come here to speak English, not for you to practice your German!'" She goes on to joke, "It is probably wicked of me to delight in the irony of mismatch between intentions and interpretation, but there it is."

Another place we find that mismatch, Burt explains, is in language contact due to immigration. Her 2010 book, *The Hmong Language in Wisconsin*, explores various linguistic tasks of everyday life, and how young bilingual speakers of Hmong and English can find themselves at odds between two linguistic systems, and more painfully, between two systems of politeness and interaction. But we don't even have to go as far as Wisconsin to find linguistic-interactional mismatches (and the irony that so delights her). Her recent research has been on the local interpretations of choices we make in naming each other, specifically in the academy, but not only there. Burt's most recent publication, "There's Not a Lot of Negotiation: Address Terms in an Academic Department," which is published in *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Impoliteness*, explores the motivations of different participants in the academic enterprise—undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty—in choosing how to address one another, and in reacting to how they are addressed. In a paper she currently has under review, she looks further at how address and reference terms for each other have changed over time for a group of women, not primarily in the academy. There's irony to be found there, too, she explains—if you look for it! It's been suggested, not just by Burt, that students in linguistics courses who discover how complex language is may never want to speak again. Certainly, the study of sociopragmatic ambiguity can contribute to that effect. She explains that she tries to incorporate some study of real-life linguistic interaction in her upper-level linguistics courses. She says, "For example, this fall, students in sociolinguistics will be listening on campus to address term choice and usage, adding their ears to mine. I am already looking forward to some very interesting term papers."

Faculty News & Accomplishments

Selected Publications and Presentations

Amato, Joe. *Sipping Coffee @ Carmela's*. Poetry. Lit Fest Press, 2016.

Breu, Christopher. "Technologies of Modernism: Historicism in Foucault and Dos Passos."

Understanding Foucault, Understanding Modernism. Ed. David Scott New York: Bloomsbury, 2017. 137-156.

Broad, Bob, and Michael Theune. "Value Hunger: Feeding the Need for Assessment in Poetry." *Birmingham Poetry Review* 44 (Spring 2017). 63-88.

Coats, Karen. "Between Fashion and Faith: Religious Identity as a Cultural Minority Position in Young Adult Literature." *Cultural Minorities in Children's Literature and Verbal Culture*. Xosé A. Neira Cruz and Gor-Tove Sandsmark. Vidgis Finnbogadottir Institute of Foreign Languages-University of Santiago de Compostela: campUSCulturae, 2016. pp. 57-64. Print.

Ellison, Katherine. "Media Scholarship and 18th-Century Studies." *Literature Compass* 14.3 (2017). Available: onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/lic3.12380/full.

Fleisher, Kass, co-editor, *Resist Much/Obey Little: Inaugural Poems for the Resistance*. Spuyten Duyvil, 2017. Print.

Halle, Steve. "Poetry Reading." 21 February 2017, Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio. Reading.

Hochstetler, Sarah. Invited Speaker, "Media Literacy in Hostile Information Environments," *Data & Society*, New York, Summer 2017.

Jung, Julie, and Kellie Sharp-Hoskins. "Emergent Mattering: Building Rhetorical Ethics at the Limits of the Human." Kenneth Burke + The Posthuman. Ed. Chris Mays, Nathaniel

Rivers, and Kellie Sharp-Hoskins. College Park: Pennsylvania State UP. Forthcoming October 2017.

McBride, William Thomas. "Chuck Berry Drew Influences From Musical Melting Pot" discussing the historical and cultural impact of black rock progenitor Chuck Berry, interviewed by Mike McCurdy on WGLT's Sound Ideas, April 4, 2017.

McLaughlin, Robert L. "Twenty-Four Hours Can Go So Fast: The Carpe Diem Romance in World War II Drama." Presented at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Annual Meeting. San Diego, April 14, 2017.

Moran, Mary Jeanette. "Part of Me Lies Buried in Lace and Roses': Narrative Relational Identity in *Code Name Verity*." International Conference on Narrative. Lexington, Kentucky, March 2017.

Nersessova, Irina. "The (In)Adequacy of Language to Express Post-War Trauma." Northeast Modern Language Association (NEMLA). Baltimore. March 23-26, 2017.

Neuleib, Janice. "Deliver Us from Evil," "The Hands of God," "Caritas," "Into the Light," Fall 2016 issue *Intégrité: A Faith and Learning Journal*. 15:2.

Parry, Sally. "It Can't Happen Here: Sinclair Lewis and the Challenge to Democracy," *Signature*, January 16, 2017. www.signature-reads.com/2017/01/sinclair-lewis-challenge-democracy/.

Robillard, Amy E. "On Empathy and Appeasement." *Survive and Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine* 3.1 (2017): 44-49. Available at repository.stcloud-state.edu/survive_thrive/vol3/iss1/8/.

Seloni, Lysya and Yigitoglu, Nur. "Metadiscourse analysis of English language teacher candidates' writing journals," Metadiscourse across genres: Mapping interaction in spoken and written discourse. Thursday, March 30, 2017, North Cyprus, Middle East Technical University.

Thetard, Lisa. "Real Reading and Authentic Writing": Pre-Service Teachers Designing Lessons for Student Engagement. IATE Fall Conference Oct. 22, 2016. Normal.

Troelstrup, Holms, Steve Halle, and Tess Ward. "Award-Winning Professional Publications with Preprofessional Staff: Mentorship and Applied Learning in Literary Publishing." AWP Conference, 10 February 2017, Washington Convention Center, Washington, D.C., Panel presentation.

Ugor, Paul. "Postcoloniality & the Informal Sector: Spaces of Negotiated Labor in Nigeria." Annual African Studies Association Conference, Washington, D.C., 1-3 December, 2016.

Additional Items of Interest

76 faculty/staff members and students participated in the Read-In to celebrate the contributions of African American Literature to our nation and world.

Professor Karen Coats was honored as a visiting scholar at Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand, March 27-31.

Kass Fleisher curated a marathon reading by contributors to *Litscapes 2015*, November 4, 2016. Additionally, she led "Litscapes II," a one-day conference to develop the second iteration of the *Litscapes* series of anthologies, October 7, 2016.

William Thomas McBride appeared in the media: "Hitchcock Pitches 'Curve Balls' During Film Festival," promoting Six Week Film School, Alfred Hitchcock-Master of Style, interviewed by Mike McCurdy on WGLT's Sound Opinions, Feb. 1, 2017. wgl.org/post/hitchcock-pitches-curve-balls-during-film-festival#stream/0.

Professor Emerita Janice Neuleib was awarded a National Writing Project US SEED grant to be used for the Summer Teacher Workshop this summer. The grant is for \$15,000.

Sally Parry was interviewed for several publications, including the *Chicago Tribune* and *BBC News*, and on various radio stations around the country, plus Canada and Ireland, for insights into the Sinclair Lewis novel *It Can't Happen Here* and parallels to the presidential election. She shared the CBC radio panel with Margaret Atwood.

and materialism, and the ways in which cultural productions, including literary texts, enact important ideological work. His focus explores difficult and controversial themes in American culture, including masculinity, racial fantasies, race, and conceptions of Southern manhood, misogyny, historical and psychological roots of white supremacy, and broader explorations of race, class, gender, and nationalism.

His excellence as a scholar extends beyond Illinois State University. In summer 2011 he was invited to teach at Paderborn University in Germany, and in fall 2011 a Fulbright Grant allowed him to conduct and share his research with the intellectual community at McMaster University in Hamilton in Ontario, Canada. His publications include two books: *Insistence of the Material: Literature in the Age of Biopolitics* (2014) and *Hard-Boiled Masculinities* (2005). He currently has three books in progress. He is also the author of numerous book chapters and articles in a range of journals, including *Symplokē*, *Textual Practice*, *Twentieth-Century Literature*, and *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts & Letters*.

Reprinted in part from Morgan J. Wheeler's report: news.illinoisstate.edu/2017/02/cas-announces-outstanding-college-researchers/.

International Brothers Grimm Award: Congratulations, Professor Roberta Seelinger Trites!

Roberta Seelinger Trites is a Distinguished Professor in the Department of English, and she is currently serving as the interim department chair in the



College of Business. This year, Trites was awarded the prestigious 16th International Brothers Grimm Award, an honor given biannually to one global scholar who contributes outstanding research to chil-



dren's literature. Over 400 scholars from around the world were asked to nominate someone for this honor; in the end, Trites was a finalist along with scholars from Germany, Japan, China, and Canada. The committee explains that Trites ultimately won because her numerous books, the first of which has been published in multiple languages, "are groundbreaking in their theoretical approaches to adolescent literature; feminist studies; [and] historical and cultural literary studies." Furthermore, they note that in her time as president of the Children's Literature Association, her "major contribution was to shift this association's focus from a mainly North American view to a more international perspective and to enhance its academic rigor. This work has made significant contributions to the development of the field over a very long period." Finally, Trites was awarded this honor because of her outstanding dedication to her students.

Trites's work focuses on feminisms and female empowerment. It is fitting then that she is the first American woman to win this award since its inception in 1987. From her *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* (1997) to her forthcoming *Twenty-First Century Feminisms in Children's and Adolescent Literature*, she has set out to call attention to the ways girls are treated in fiction, and what that can tell us about our implicit ideas surrounding girlhood specifically and childhood more generally. As Rebecca Gropp reports in her news article about the International Brothers Grimm award, Trites said: "Children are the most exploited group of people on the planet. It's the only marginalized group we have all belonged to yet we ignore the vulnerability and marginalization experienced during childhood. We must pay attention to what we teach children through the stories we tell them." It is this dedication to ethics and equality, combined with an academic rigor and empathetic pedagogy that makes Professor Trites uniquely deserving of this award.

Graduate Student News & Accomplishments

Selected Publications and Presentations

Cochran, Olga. "Stand-up Comedy as a teaching tool for Linguistics and Composition classes." Teaching and Learning Symposium on January 12, 2017.

Halsey, Robin. "Literature and Culture in Adult ESL: Building Bridges to Literacy." Presented at Tennessee TESOL Conference, "Respect: Bridging Languages, Academics and Communities," Memphis, March 9-11, 2017.

Karn, Colleen. "Frankenstein's American Horror Success Story: A Case Study of Monsters as Agents of Social Change." PCA/ACA National Conference in San Diego on April 13, 2017.

Kroonblawd, Hannah. "Since You Have Come This Far" (poem), *Minnesota Review*, Spring 2017, Vol. 88.

Langdon, Bridget. "Real Life Degenerates," *Sick Lit Magazine*, February 20, 2017.

Levato, Francesco. *A Continuum of Force*. Chicago: Moria Books/Locofo Chaps, 2017.

Merrifield, Jillian. "Great Chicago Fires." *After Hours* 34 (Winter 2017).

Mixon-Webster, Jonah. "In the Figurative I Respond—This shit be killin me!" and "Twitter Fingers"—*Barzakh Journal*. Spring 2017.

Perez, Laurel. "How to Be a Working Class Hero in the Creative Writing Classroom: An Exploration of a Feminist Working Class Activist Pedagogy," Paper presented as part of the panel session "The Body in Words: Teaching Creative Techniques in Sound Symbolism, Sexuality, Silences, and the Feminist Working Class." Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference (AWP). Washington, D.C., February 9, 2017.

Roberts, Krista. Contributing editor, Special Issue of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, "What's Next?: The Futures of Auto/Biography Studies." 32.2 (2017).

Roncero-Bellido, Ana. "Embracing Students' Diverse Literacies through a Pedagogy of the Flesh." 2017 Conference on College Composition and Communication. Portland, Oregon, (March 15-18).

Soares, Michael. "From Trafalgar Square to the Secondary Classroom: Resistance and Pedagogy of Orwellian Spaces." "Spatiality and Temporality" International Conference: Time Space and Identity. London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research. Birbeck, University of London, June 24, 2017.

Strom, Kristen. "Redefining Borders in the English Language Arts Classroom Through the Use of Text Sets." Illinois Association of Teachers of English Fall Conference. Normal, October 21, 2016.

Trivedi, Amish. Review of Leonard Cohen's final album, *You Want It Darker*. *The Rumpus*, March 2017. therumpus.net/2017/03/sound-takes-you-want-it-darker/.

Additional Items of Interest

Ph.D. Graduate Students Olga Cochran, Elizabeth Jones, and Mijan Rahman completed a Certificate of Specialized Instruction in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Bridget Langdon was accepted for a week-long residency this summer at Sundress Academy for the Arts in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Francesco Levato has accepted a position at California State University San Marcos as an assistant professor of Literature and Writing Studies, specializing in digital literature, poetics, and critical/cultural theory.

Jonah Mixon-Webster had clips of his talk, "A Technology of Voice: On Pleasure, Presence, and Liberty in Hip-Hop Adlibs," given at the 2017 Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference featured on NPR's Code Switch. one.npr.org/?sharedMediaId=512914243:515270233.

Michael Soares, English teacher at Pontiac High School, co-hosted (with biology teacher Paul Ritter) 12 high school students and three teachers from Brazil in an interdisciplinary ecoproject and cultural exchange April 23-29. Soares led the group on a Chicago Loop tour on April 26.

New Route Theatre was awarded a Harmon Arts Grant for performances of Ph.D. student Irene Taylor's one-woman play *Suppos'd to*.

Alumni News

Daniel Ibrahim Abdalla

In 2015, Abdalla completed a master's degree in English at King's College London. Currently, he is working on his Ph.D. in English at the University of Oxford. He is writing about Henry James and Marcel Proust. He has fond memories of Illinois State University.

Michael Agombar

Agombar graduated as a double major in English and psychology in 2015. He is now getting his master's degree in computer science from DePaul University and working as a software engineer in Chicago. In June he is moving to London to begin a career in financial trading. He wouldn't be where he is without his English major!

Stuart Boyd

Boyd graduated ISU with an English studies B.A. in May of 2011. Since then, he completed his M.A. in English at Bradley University (2013) and worked as the writing center coordinator and adjunct English instructor at Illinois Central College (2012–2015).

In December of 2015, he moved to Denver and currently works as the student engagement coordinator at Arapahoe Community College (in Littleton). He works on First Year Experience curriculum development, teaches academic achievement courses, and works to enhance student communications. Boyd has nothing but positive memories from his time at ISU and considers the English faculty top of the line.

Taylor L. Hobson

After graduating in December 2014 with a B.A. in English—publishing studies sequence and minoring in children's studies, Hobson began working for Accenture (a Fortune 500, management consulting company). In her position as a content developer, Hobson collaborated directly with experts from State Farm to create training materials and documents for new insurance agents. She now uses the skills she developed in that position in her current role as technical writer for the Bids, Proposals and Pricing department of Follett School Solutions, Inc. As a technical writer, Hobson works with bid specialists and sales reps to write responses to RFPs from school districts. She also maintains up-to-date product information, designs graphics and document styles, and acts as her department's liaison to other departments. She currently resides in McHenry.

Stacie Hunt

Hunt graduated in 2004 with her M.A. in English studies. Living in the New Orleans area since 2011, she has worked as a singer, voice teacher, and choir director. In 2016, she published *Space to Dream: Poems*. She followed with two more poetry collections and a children's novel, *Tiger Kingdom & The Book of Destiny*. She's currently writing her second children's novel.

Carol Johnson

(D.A. 1985) has taught writing, grammar, and linguistics courses at Virginia Wesleyan College in Norfolk, Virginia, for 32 years. She developed the writing center and served as director of composition for many years. She and her family live in Virginia Beach.

Sue Kuykendall

(D.A. 1993) teaches second-language composition and serves as director of non-native composition at Parkland College in Champaign.

Additional Faculty and Staff Honors

Karen Coats

Janice Witherspoon Neuleib Award for Scholarly Achievement of the Year

Steve Halle

Outstanding Administrative/Professional Staff Member in the College of Arts and Sciences

Paul Ugor

University Research Initiative Award

Jeremy Hurley

Department of English Exceptional Teacher of the Year—Instructional Assistant Professor

Tara Lyons

Department of English Exceptional Teacher of the Year—Assistant Professor

Hyun-Sook Kang

Department of English Exceptional Teacher of the Year—Associate Professor

Amy Robillard

Department of English Exceptional Teacher of the Year—Professor

Ricardo Cruz

Department of English Outstanding Graduate Mentoring Award

Julie Jung

Department of English Outstanding Graduate Mentoring Award

Bob McLaughlin

Department of English Outstanding Department Service Award



Continued on page 12

New Faculty Member Spotlight

Welcome to ISU, Professor Erika Sparby!

Professor Erika Sparby joined the ISU Department of English this fall. She recently completed her Ph.D. at Northern



Illinois University, where she specialized in rhetoric and composition, as well as technical communication. While there, she also obtained a certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. As such, her research

explores gender and communication online. She examines women's ethos online, the changing nature of women's public rhetoric, and ways to address online aggression. Her dissertation examines internet memes, collective identities, and haters to uncover ways to resist and counter online aggressions—particularly those surrounding gender identity—in digital spaces.

Sparby says that she is excited to join ISU because our faculty maintains a commitment to excellence in teaching and research. She also explains that ISU's dedication to student mentoring mirrors her own. In 2016, Sparby was awarded both the Director's Outstanding Graduate Assistant Award for Excellence in Teaching as well as the Outstanding Women Student Award. She is coming to ISU with a passion to teach and is looking forward to working with undergraduate and graduate English students to help them succeed both at ISU and beyond.

Professor Christopher C. De Santis on the Legacy of Langston Hughes

Professor Christopher C. De Santis was invited to join scholars from across the country November 10-11 to commemorate Langston Hughes on the 50th anniversary of his death. "Remembering Langston Hughes—His Art, Life & Legacy Fifty Years Later," was hosted by the Department of African American Studies at Princeton University and featured panels, as well as a keynote address by author Elizabeth Alexander and a performance by U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith.

De Santis gave a talk entitled "Langston Hughes: The Brilliant Rebel, Rebellious Against Everything," focusing on the politically charged, nonfictional writings of the author referred to at various points in his career as poet low-rate of Harlem, dangerous Communist, Christ

Daniel Liddle

Liddle is very proud to have graduated from ISU with a B.A. in English/Ed in 2010 and happy to announce that he has earned his Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition from Purdue University and has accepted a position as an assistant professor for the fall.

Mark Lueckenhoff

Lueckenhoff graduated from ISU in 1977. He went on to earn his master's degree from Truman State University and spent many years teaching for Lewis County C-1 Schools in Ewing, Missouri. Positions included middle school language arts and social studies, as well as serving as librarian and district technology coordinator. The highlight of his career was winning the Milken Educator Award, often called the "Oscars of Teaching." Though retired, he still works half time running the high school library.

Timothy A. Micek

Micek earned the D.A. in English studies in 1994 and is an associate professor at Ohio Dominican University, where he has directed the MA in TESOL since 2004. In addition to teaching a variety of TESOL courses, Micek has published several peer-reviewed articles and performed various services to the profession. He has taught English in China and trained teachers in Korea.

JoAnna Stephens Mink

Most recent publication: "Love, Deception, and Disguise in *A Few Crusted Characters*." *Thomas Hardy's Short Stories: New Perspectives*. Eds. Juliette Berning Schaefer and Siobhan Craft Brownson. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. 123-39.

All her degrees are from ISU's English department: B.S. '73, M.S. '75, D.A. '85. She is professor emerita of English from Minnesota State University (2008). She lives in Normal and actively volunteers at the McLean County Museum of History, Heartland Theatre, and the board of Beyond Normal Films. She also writes the reviews for the ISU Alumni Association's Reggie Reads column.

Robert Moore (B.S. 1967; M.S. 1968)

After graduating from ISU's English Department with bachelor's and master's degrees, Moore earned the Ph.D. in English at the University of Cincinnati and is professor of English at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. Moore writes under the pen name "Red Hawk," and he has authored eight collections of poetry. His most recent book, *Return to the Mother: A Lover's Handbook*, is, according to a press release, "a collection of 94 poems inspired by the ancient Chinese spiritual Master Lao Tsu, from his book *Tao Te Ching*, considered a classic in spiritual literature. Each of Red Hawk's poems is 16 lines and the title of each poem is a line from one of Lao Tsu's sutras, which are rules or aphorisms in Sanskrit literature. Moore describes each poem as a "response and a commentary on Lao Tsu's Sutra, a call-and-response over the centuries between two spiritual seekers after truth." (www.uamont.edu/news/2017/aug/01/red-hawks-latest-collection-poetry-inspired-ancien/).

Amy Beth Outland

Outland '07 is a freelance writer and editor. Several of her pieces have been published in fine arts journals including *Exact Change Only*, *Prevail N Prosper*, *The Insomniac Propagandist*, *Poetry in Motion*, *Reflections & Illuminations*, *Baby Shoes: A Flash Fiction Anthology*, *Lessons From Losers In Love: True Stories From Failed Relationships That Turned Into Valuable Life Lessons*, *Rhubarb Magazine*, and *Poetic Hustles: Volume 2: Life Matters*. She also works as a service excellence representative at Franciscan Health in Olympia Fields. Her first novel, *I'm Not Broken* (2015), is available now from Amazon.com. Her first collection of poetry and essays *Musings from the Elephant Piano Notebook* (2016) is available now on Amazon.com. Her latest novella *Pink And Sparkly: Personal Stories of How I Roll* (2017) is now available from Amazon.com. You can follow her on Twitter @amypond27 or find her on Facebook, Google + or LinkedIn.

Jessica Smith

Smith '15, a graduate of the publishing studies sequence (B.A.), was recently hired as editorial assistant in content delivery at Sourcebooks in Naperville. At ISU, Smith graduated

summa cum laude with departmental honors and served as College of Arts and Sciences commencement speaker. Prior to her recent employment change, she worked as copy editor at *The Pantagraph* in Bloomington and as data entry operator at H.W. Holdings in Normal.

Susan Springer

Springer (Beuth) graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of arts in English from ISU on December 12, 2009. After spending five years teaching English at Mount Pulaski High School, she took a job this year teaching English at Olympia Middle School in Stanford. She has been teaching for seven years total. She married Brian Springer (a farmer and U of I graduate) on June 25, 2011, and they reside in Minier with their adorable 4-year-old rescue dog, Copper.

Alissa Veenstra

Veenstra earned her B.A. in English in 2008. She now lives and works in Chicago. As vice president of Customer Experience at PerkSpot, she leads a fantastic team that works closely with large companies to deliver awesome workplace perks and discounts. She highly values and prioritizes travel, visiting Iceland, France, Mexico, England, Greece, and Cuba in 2017.

In Loving Memory

Professor Elizabeth Hatmaker

Elizabeth Anne Hatmaker died March 3, 2017, after a valiant struggle with complications from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). She was an instructional assistant professor at Illinois State University, where she taught classes in film, writing, and popular culture. She was a much-beloved teacher and was the author of two books of poetry, *Girl in Two Pieces* (Blaze Vox, 2011) and *Infrastructures* (Downstate Legacies, 2017). She also published poetry in a number of different literary magazines and articles on pedagogy, public culture, and the noir novel. She and her husband, Professor Christopher Breu, were working on a forthcoming collection on film noir and the noir novel entitled, *Noir Affect*.



Hatmaker was beloved by her students and colleagues and will be truly missed by all. Doctoral student Laurel Perez collected the following memories from former and current graduate students:

From Josette Therese:

My first ever conversation with Elizabeth took place in fall 2012, a few days before I started the master's program at ISU. There, on the graduate director's lush, Gatsby-esque lawn, Elizabeth and I discussed the *Fifty Shades of Grey* franchise and the merits of "mommy porn." That's how most of my future conversations with Elizabeth usually went. She generously lent me her Doris Wishman films and her and Chris's '70s films; we compared which *Behind the Green Door* (the original or the sequel) we liked better. Elizabeth and I had a lot in common. We shared a love for V. C. Andrews's *Flowers in the Attic*, *Jughead* (from the Archie Comics), and true-crime shows about murderous wives, just to name a few.

Elizabeth was one of the first people who showed me that you could write critically about things like sitcoms, B-films, and everyday life. That you could be a woman and speak unapologetically about sex, even ugly sex. When I looked at Elizabeth who, in her stunning robes, was absolutely magnificent, I realized that I needed to let go of my own fears of being deemed unconventional. I know I wouldn't be the person I am today if it wasn't for Elizabeth and Chris; they both helped me start to become a scholar. I also wouldn't be the (somewhat) adult woman I am today without Elizabeth's leading example of confidence, brilliance, and style.

From Emily Johnston:

I will remember her for her poignant quips and searing poetry; her fiery fashion; her unflinching embrace of all that is sensual and just; and her refusal to absorb what women have been told to be and to do. Elizabeth, your energy and my memories of you push me onto being the most unapologetic rebel woman poet/writer I can be. I love you.

Continued on page 14

hater, and, more kindly, champion of black America and Poet Laureate of Harlem. "We need Langston Hughes as much now as ever," De Santis said. "The vision that he conveyed over the course of a prolific writing career was both an act of defiance and a call to action: Hughes defied a nation that kept millions of people in states of constant struggle through legal segregation and the fostering of racial and class prejudice and violence; he also challenged black artists to cultivate and celebrate the rich culture of African American communities in music, the visual arts, and literature."

Now, 50 years after his death, the defiance and challenge that Hughes evoked on the page during his long career retain a sense of immediacy for contemporary audiences. De Santis continued, "Given the rise we have all witnessed recently of racially motivated acts of hate and violence; the emboldening of white supremacists and justifications of their ideologies and actions under the guise of free speech and fairness of representation; legislative attempts and successes at whittling away the resources and services for the most vulnerable people in our nation; and a head of the executive branch of our federal government who takes great pride in the most unthoughtful forms of language use, Langston Hughes's powerful words and steadfast political commitments are as relevant now as they ever were."

On Giving Back

Leslie Bertagnolli

Leslie Bertagnolli, a founding member of the ISU English Studies Advisory Board, earned the B.A. in English (1970) and the M.A. in English (1971) at ISU. She also has many familial connections to ISU: Her



older brother has a Ph.D. in biology, and her younger sister has a B.A. and MFA in art history from ISU. Her brother-in-law also has an MFA in art from ISU. Her father was a teacher and coach

at Illinois Wesleyan University and Bloomington High School for 40 years, and her mother was a homemaker.

Bertagnolli went to graduate school at the University of Illinois where she obtained a Ph.D. in English in 1975 and a law degree in 1979. She then practiced

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law in Chicago for Baker&McKenzie LLP for 38 years. Her husband is also a lawyer practicing in Chicago.

When asked about why she gives to ISU, she said, “I think of giving as investing in the kind of plans that ISU has always made, and will continue to make, to improve education and help its students and faculty lead creative lives that shape themselves, their families, and communities in the best possible ways.” She continued: “I enrolled at ISU just as it introduced its liberal arts curriculum. Its education department had forged a path to excellence, but ISU was not a complacent institution. It wanted more possibilities for its students, and it knew it could be excellent at whatever it chose to do to fulfill its educational mission. It knew that excellence would require dynamic change and the resources to support that change.” Finally, Bertagnoli expressed her pride in the ISU English department: “Witnessing its successes has been a delightful dividend. In this case, past performance IS a predictor of future success!”

Bruce Erikson

Bruce Erikson graduated with his English Studies Ph.D. from ISU in 2008 and he is currently the director of the Program in Professional Writing at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While at ISU, he focused on business and technical writing, pedagogy, and cognition.



Originally from Portland, Oregon, Erikson was 47 when he began studying for his advanced degree. Before coming to ISU, he held many jobs, including that of a firefighter and paramedic, accountant, software developer, and production manager, just to name a few.

When asked why he gives to ISU, Erikson stated simply, “I can; therefore, I must.” And, on the idea of “giving back,” he explains, “It is more about giving forward; it is about participating in an institution preparing its students to improve the world. In sum, I am continuing what I began when I attended ISU as a student.” Together, these sentiments illuminate the philosophy and goals of our English department at ISU by highlighting the importance of extending empathy and goodness out to others.

From Roddy Rodman:

I met Elizabeth for the first time when I attended a Euphemism meeting as a first year Ph.D. student at ISU. I remember thinking, “Such grace, beauty, intelligence, and creativity in one person!” I wanted to be like that. Over the years as I got to know Elizabeth, I deeply appreciated the selfless goodness she effortlessly introduced to any gathering that was fortunate to be graced by her presence. I remember so very vividly how in her most trying days, she had not lost an iota of the grace she always emanated. Above all, she was my friend and will always be.

From Eric Longfellow:

Kind and beautiful with striking intelligence—to me Elizabeth existed outside of time. Being in her presence, one got the feeling she could’ve lived within a thousand years of her lifetime and adapted flawlessly. There aren’t many people I can say that about. Part blinding rural faerie, part future-glam radical. She changed so many lives in so many ways. And goddamn did she have style.

John Charles Shields

Professor Emeritus Russ Rutter shares memories of his friend and colleague, John Shields.

Distinguished Professor of English John Shields passed away on April 1, 2017, after 32 years as a teacher and scholar in the Department of English. He suffered from cancer during his last months, but he was a publishing scholar until that time, even after retirement. John’s seminal work on the poetry of Phillis Wheatley earned him national and international recognition. I have often likened John to one of my favorite Renaissance scholars, John Leland, who adopted a lifelong mission of bringing obscured texts “out of deadly darkness and into lively light.” It was John Shields’s mission likewise to bring Phillis Wheatley’s poetic and prose texts “out of deadly darkness and into lively light.” And he succeeded brilliantly.

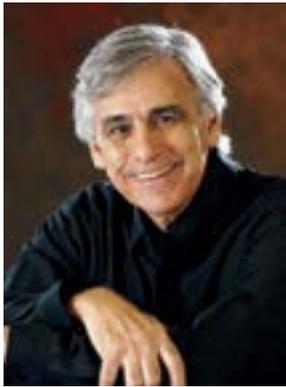
John and I met in 1979 outside the glacially slow Stevenson Hall elevator and soon began to value one another, first as colleagues but soon as friends, from that time until the days he was lying on his bed, slowly dying. We shared a love of Samuel Johnson’s *Rasselas*, an apologue about making a “choice of life.” In one of our last conversations, John recalled *Rasselas*, smiled a bit wanly, and said that perhaps it was time to “peruse the last chapters of our favorite book.” Suffice it to say that they treat *Rasselas*’s growing awareness of mortality, the finitude of all earthly endeavor, and the slow drift of time.

No memoir of John would be complete without reference to what I shall term the Johannine Lunch. For John, lunch was not food grasped on the fly but rather an event in itself. It was no snack but rather a Banquet of Trimalchio—without the bacchanalian features inappropriate to the professoriate, not to mention impossible at Cracker Barrel and frowned upon at the Outback Steakhouse. There was more than one course, and a pleasant, leisured expansiveness. It was John’s way of creating a civilized forum for friendship and intellectual conversation. As Virginia Woolf has it, “No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anybody but oneself. We are all going to heaven and Vandyck is of the company—in other words, how good life seemed, how sweet its rewards . . .” It was during one of these events that I offered to proofread the manuscript of John’s edition of Phillis Wheatley’s *Poems of 1773* (1989). Little did I expect to proofread 10 more of his books, or to be named in several more prefaces, or once to be the subject of a dedication. John’s books stand “in serried rows” on the shelf behind me, “all that will be left of me after I leave the planet,” as he used to say. What a legacy!

Because books were John’s natural habitat and because we spent countless hours talking about them, I think he would approve of my having referred to several in this brief space. As I close, I imagine John transmuted into another Renaissance author, Samuel Daniel, and exclaiming,

What good is like to this,
To do worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the reading, and the worlds delight?
For naught there is that shall to me undo
The love I bear unto this holy skill:
This is the thing that I was born to do,
This is my Scene, this part I must fulfill.

I am proud to have been a friend to John Shields as he has gone about the work that he was born to do. I am even more proud that John Shields chose to be a friend to me as he went about his life of intellectual adventure. Let Catullus have the last words: “Frater, ave atque vale.”



Charles B. Harris

Professor Emeritus Charles B. Harris, 76, passed away on October 31, 2017, at his home in Bloomington.

He was born Nov. 2, 1940, in Bastrop, Texas, to Gus and Ruth Harris. The son of a railroad man, Charlie never lived in one town for more than a year until high school, when his family settled in Columbus, Texas. A superior athlete who lettered in four sports, Charlie received a full-ride football scholarship to Texas Lutheran University (Class of 1963). He also caught the acting bug at TLU after a speech teacher wandered up to him in the middle of football practice and told him she wanted him to try out for the part of Hercules in a school play. He embarrassedly said “yes” so she would leave the field.

Charlie would go on to be cast in the play, and stay active in theater—from summer stock to community theater—throughout his college and graduate school years, and then picking up acting later in life post-retirement with roles in several plays and independent films.

At the urging of a professor and mentor, he applied to graduate school at Southern Illinois University (SIU), where he received a teaching assistantship. As a teacher, he met a fellow serious student from Chicago with whom he began a courtship. That woman, Victoria Frenkel, would go on to become his bride. Married in 1968, Charlie passed away just shy of what would have been their 50th wedding anniversary this spring. The title of his book, *Pas-sionate Virtuosity*, also applies to Charlie’s life.

After earning a master’s degree and doctorate in English, Charlie accepted a teaching position at Illinois State University, where he was a professor for 35 years, including serving 15 years as English Department chair, until his retirement in 2003. His animated and engaging teaching style made him a popular professor, with many former students sending tributes upon news of his passing. He was a College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Lecturer and inducted into the University’s Hall of Fame.

Charlie and his wife belong to Moses Montefiore Temple. He loved baseball, watching movies, and attending theater and opera with his wife and friends. Known as *Papa* to his adoring grandchildren, he enjoyed keeping tabs on and participating in his grandsons’ lives—sporting events, plays, birthday parties, and other events. He was an accomplished author of several books and articles, served on several boards, such as Dalkey Archive Press, and spoke at international conferences.

Charlie’s survivors include his wife, Professor Emerita Victoria Harris; daughter, Kymberly, Los Angeles; son, Greg, Cincinnati; and grandsons, Ethan, Nathan and Leo. A younger brother, Sydney Harris of Victoria, Texas, preceded him in death.

Contributions may be made to a fund in Charlie’s memory. Please make checks payable to the ISU Foundation and indicate in the memo, The Charles B. Harris English Department Memorial Fund.

Helping Redbirds Rise

The Glenn Grever English Education Scholarship Endowment was established in 1996 in memory of Professor Glenn Grever. The scholarship is awarded to a full-time or part-time senior, majoring in English Education and student teaching during the semester that the scholarship is available.

Last spring, the scholarship was awarded to Monica Soulsby ’17 who writes, “I was honored to receive the Grever Scholarship. It meant a lot to be recognized within my major, and it was a huge help as I began student teaching. I am now a first-year English teacher at LaSalle-Peru Township High School, and I absolutely love my job. For the scholarship, I shared how well prepared I felt for student teaching through all the opportunities that ISU allowed me to take advantage of. Those experiences have also prepared me for my career, and I am still extremely passionate about the work I do. It was exciting and humbling to be recognized for my dedication in preparing to student teach, and the scholarship helped boost me financially into furthering the passion that I have for English Education as I began my career.”

Many students in our program depend on financial support and deserve recognition. With the recent launch of Redbirds Rising: The Campaign for Illinois State, there’s never been a better time to invest in the English department and our students.

Visit RedbirdsRising.IllinoisState.edu to learn how you can support your passion at Illinois State.



