



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2020-2021

Message from the chair

Professor Christopher C. De Santis

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

...

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

—Excerpts from Langston Hughes' "Let America Be America Again" (1936)

A few years ago, in a letter of support for a National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) Media Makers Development Grant proposal for a new documentary film, I wrote that "we need Langston Hughes as much now as ever. 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 defined 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—an immediacy that can be conveyed brilliantly in a well-crafted documentary film."



Department Chair
Chris De Santis

At the present moment, that "immediacy" to which I referred in my letter of support for the NEH grant is ever more salient. Given the proliferation over the past four years 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; judicial and legislative attempts and successes at whittling away the resources and services for the most vulnerable people in our nation, including those who

Undergraduate student achievements

The department extends its congratulations to the following undergraduates for their achievements.

- English major Lauren Lacy is the recipient of the Helen and Shirley Highland Scholarship, which was created to assist a well deserving student with the increasing costs of higher education at ISU in the College of Arts and Sciences.
- English major Cate Lewellyn is the recipient of the Robert J. Glaser Memorial Scholarship in recognition of her achievements in the Department of Economics.
- Lila Bryant was nominated for the CTE (Council for Teacher Education) Student Recognition of Excellence Award.
- Alex Ellison was selected as a recipient of the CTE (Council for Teacher Education) Student Recognition of Excellence Award.
- Julia Paschal and Kate Fortner each received a scholarship of \$5,715 through the College of Arts and Sciences Scholarship Fund for the 2020-2021 academic year. Established by the generosity of Country Financial, the fund supports students who are receiving a broad foundational education offered in the liberal arts and sciences.
- English major Rachel Seitz presented a paper titled "Assembling the Pieces of Personhood in Anne Carson's Nox" at the Richard Macksey National Undergraduate Humanities

Research Symposium held in April 2020 at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

- Eliana Ladas was awarded a highly competitive Undergraduate Research Support Program (URSP) grant for research with Professor Lillge in summer 2020. Her proposal was titled “Critical Assessment Design: Conversations in Community on Socially Just ELA Instruction.”
- English Education graduate Colleen Keefe published her work titled “The Need for Authentic Audiences: Students as Advocates for Change” in the NCTE’s *English Journal*.
- English Education program student Abbey Byrnside received the Laurine Reiske Scholarship through the College of Arts and Sciences.
- English Education program student Mallory Strauch received the Anne M. Semlak Memorial Scholarship through the WGS program.
- English Education program student Raquel Armas is the recipient of the 2020 English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE) Geneva Smitherman Cultural Diversity Grant.

Department of English Newsletter

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“We need Langston Hughes as much now as ever.”

Dr. Chris De Santis
Chair, Department of English

came to the U.S. seeking more secure lives for themselves and families; and politicians who take great pride in the most unthoughtful forms of language use with words that demean and destroy—we need Langston Hughes as much now as ever.

But I doubt that, had Hughes defied the odds, lived to a ripe old age of 118, and been with us today, he would be much surprised by contemporary life in these United States. This was a writer who, in his late 50s, recalled the Fourth of July speeches celebrating “liberty and justice, freedom and democracy” that he had heard as a boy, knowing full well that “they did not apply to me because I could not even buy an ice cream soda at the corner drug store where my mother bought the family soap. I could not go to the movies in Lawrence, Kansas, because there was a sign up: COLORED NOT ADMITTED.” This was also a writer who once reminisced that he “grew up with the NAACP” and “learned to read with *The Crisis* on [his] grandmother’s lap.” When Hughes accepted a commission to write the official history of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1960, he could acknowledge with a guarded optimism that the nation had made positive strides in civil rights since the Association’s founding in 1909. Lynchings, for example, an issue of the gravest importance for the NAACP, had decreased substantially over the course of a half-century campaign waged against such crimes. Travel on public forms of transportation, long a mainstay of racial segregation and discrimination, had become more civil as a direct result of the NAACP working together with organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The battle over segregation in public schools, another major campaign in which the NAACP was invested, had resulted in the beginnings of the painfully slow process of integration. Other NAACP campaigns involving African-American voting rights, restrictive covenants in housing, and discrimination in places of employment had also met with some degree of success.

Still, Hughes recognized that the struggle was far from over. Almost precisely a year before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law, Hughes reminded readers of the popular *Saturday Review* that the prospects for Black authors remained fairly bleak and rife with prejudice, particularly in peripheral areas such as “Hollywood, radio and television, editorial staff positions, and lecturing” that often guaranteed to white writers some financial security when book royalties faltered. Rhetorically savvy in his approach to educating the many white readers of the *Review*, Hughes gently but effectively alluded to the old racial bugaboos of miscegenation and social equality, suggesting that because “many women’s clubs and forums booking lecturers have teas or receptions following the programs, nine times out of 10, Negro speakers are not invited. Teas are social events: Negroes are not wanted, not even as star names.”

A couple years later, in a typescript of a BBC radio broadcast that he prepared in March 1965, Hughes wrote:

The country is divided in its racial attitudes. Its major parties are divided in their racial attitudes. The Southern Democrats and the Northern are far from seeing eye to eye. The Republicans are even more divided and, at the moment, cannot make up their minds at all what to do before the next presidential election rolls around. “To be or not to be” pro-Negro, that is the question. And how to square daily behavior with all those beautiful words about equality in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Supreme Court decisions?

Sound familiar? Hughes would be as concerned as most of us, but perhaps not at all surprised, by politicians who have encouraged—indeed, *ensured*—racial and ethnic intolerance, division and discord by such things as grouping violent white supremacists and nonviolent counter-protesters; by shaming prominent athletes who protested police brutality against people of color during the singing of the national anthem at football games; by referring to a U.S. senator as “Pocahontas” in mockery of her claim of Native American ancestry; by belittling and dismissing immigrants; by sanctioning the separation of thousands of children

from their undocumented parents; and by refusing to speak names—George Floyd, Breonna Taylor—in public comments on police reform.

No, I don't think that Hughes would be at all surprised about this, but I have no doubt that he would be extremely vocal about it. As a good student of language, literature, and writing, Hughes knew the power of words and would no doubt call out, were he with us today, the historical elisions of campaign slogans like "make America great again," tossing away the MAGA hat and perhaps replacing it with a LABAA hat. But he would first remind us that, to honor and respect and transform through the democratic process the marginalized/parenthetical voice forced throughout history to reply to the phrase, "Let America Be America Again," with, "(It never was America to me)."

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain—
All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!

Message from Professor Ricardo Cruz, acting-chair, 2019-2020

Always thinking of the department and thanking everyone in it, Professor Ricardo Cortez Cruz proudly served as acting chair for 2019-2020. Though Cruz missed his time with creative writing and did not teach a class for the academic year, he liked having the chance to creatively right matters for all in the department. "To/for me, the most challenging aspect of the job is the personnel/personal issues," Cruz said. "But as always, we got a lot done together, and we kept ourselves together." As a part of such dedicated service, Cruz found himself smiling his thanks a lot and sometimes crying or laughing aloud. Cruz says he wanted to never sleep on something (or rest his laurels) while he continually did his "boss things" and enjoyed just being himself in this new role. "Acting chair was indeed how I lived my values," Cruz said. "It allowed me to demonstrate my healthy respect for the work we are doing in the department as well as show my character and integrity, which have remained key sources of strength for me. I had such incredible, unforgettable experiences, and the support from everyone in the department was beyond generous; it was amazing."



What else? "I only hope I contributed significantly during the year," Cruz laughs. "I quickly realized our department is so great, so brilliant and dynamic already as a pretty large unit, that it practically runs itself, does the right thing. The department never stops doing things for others. That is the beauty of it. The truth is, I was blessed to work with an associate chair, program directors, professional staff, academic advisers, faculty, students, fellow administrators, etc.—the list seems to go on and on—whose genius and ingenuity made my job a lot easier!"

What Cruz was not prepared for was the pandemic and its spread across the world of academia. "Thankfully, the spring semester still ran its course, evidence(d) that we made progress, did at least something good, under quite challenging circumstances," Cruz said. "Obviously, COVID-19 continues to really throw us a curve (and put some English on it), but, it is safe to say, we have also worked extremely hard to stay the course. One reason I gladly served as acting chair is because I believe the people in our department have always/already proven ourselves to be good-hearted and com/passionate and strong. These are character traits that I continue to deeply appreciate and admire."

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Faculty publications

- Breu, Chris. A short Essay on Elizabeth Hatmaker and her legacy. *Spoon River Poetry Review* 44.1 (Summer 2019): 27-28.
"After-Antifoundationalism: Ten Theses on the Limits of Antitheory." *What's Wrong with Anti-Theory?* Ed. Jeffrey di Leo. London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 250-272.
"Utopian Trade: A Minimal Defense of Intellectual Exchange." *Forum I: Trading Literature*. *Symploke* 27.1-2: 379-383.
"Biopolitics as/and Infrastructure." *Biotheory: Life and Death under Capitalism*. Ed. Jeffrey R. Di Leo and Peter Hitchcock. New York: Routledge, 2020. 119-135.
- Elizabeth Hatmaker, *Noir Affect*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2020.
Burt, Susan Meredith, Review of Larssyn Staley (2018), *Socioeconomic Pragmatic Variation*. July 24, 2019. (2019). Person-referring expressions, reference nominals and address nominals: Informalization in an Illinois neighborhood social group. In Bettina Kluge and Maria Irene Moyna (eds.), *It's not all about you: New perspectives on address research*. pp. 397-413. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Ellison, Katherine. "Ciphers and Gaming in Pleasure and War." *The Games of War in British and American Literature, 1600-1830*. Eds. Holly Faith Nelson and Jim Daems. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019: 95-115.
- Gudding, Gabriel. "FARM from POLIS." *SplitLevel Texts | SLT Journal*, Aug. 2019, splitleveltexts.com/journal/.
"HARBOR from POLIS." *SplitLevel Texts | SLT Journal*, Aug. 2019, splitleveltexts.com/journal/.
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"Venter Oss Ved Elvene." [Waiting for Us by The Rivers]. Issue 1. April 9, 2020 canwehaveourballback.org/f/issue-one.

"Phaedra." Issue 1. April 9, 2020.

- Halle, Steve. "Stratagems for Surviving in a Plague State #10: Nouveau Luxe," *Burning House*, 28 October 2019. burninghousepress.com/2019/10/28/stratagem-for-surviving-in-a-plague-state-10-by-steve-halle/.
- Hochstetler, S. & McBee Orzulak, M. (2019). "Writing problems and promises in standardized teacher performance assessments", Ed. Heidi Hallman, Kristen Pastore-Capuana, and Donna Pasternak, *Possibilities, Challenges, and Changes in English Teacher Education Today: Exploring Identity and Professionalization*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Huff, Cynthia, and Margaretta Jolly, editors. "Engaging Donna Haraway: Lives in the Natureculture Web," special issue of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2019.
"Situating Donna Haraway in the Life Narrative Web," in "Engaging Donna Haraway: Lives in the Natureculture Web," special issue of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2019.
"From the Autobiographical Pact to the Zoetropic Pack" in "Engaging Donna Haraway: Lives in the Natureculture Web," special issue of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2019.
- Lillge, Danielle. (2019). Uncovering conflict: Why teachers struggle to apply professional development learning about the teaching of writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 53(4), 340-362.
"Improving professional development relationships that support teacher learning." *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, 18 (3), pp. 365-381. 2019.
- McLaughlin, Robert L. "Twenty-First-Century Wallace: Teaching Wallace

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Cruz added, "A lot in the spring tested us, but we handled it all with newfound creativity, with renewed sense of purpose, with poise, with class, and with 'share' determination. I like how the ways in which we have fought to try to get to the other side of the pandemic and flatten its harmful impact will continue to inform the direction of the University. But, I am also inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, something that came to the front on ISU's campus last fall, that dream of diversity and inclusion really being a hallmark of the institution in terms of us stating our passion that is a commitment to social justice.

"I'm very grateful for the wonderfulness of our students. Many of them reached out and touched me in email etc. during the year to express their warm, wholehearted support. And, I would like to also thank Diane Zosky, interim dean for the College of Arts and Sciences, and Chris De Santis, chair of the English department. They are outstanding leaders, and I've learned an abundance of stuff from their enormous encouragement, wisdom, and kindness. Serving as acting chair gives and takes a lot, and I could not have done the job without them. They truly represent the extraordinary positivity and indomitable spirit of the humanities, of what keeps me there. Finally, I'd like to express my gratitude to a host (multitude) of 'folx' for the many ways in which they uniquely encouraged me, uplifted me, and bolstered my morale in the position. The department's success for the year was obviously a 'me-we,' thing, a part of a phenomenal, delightful collective that will surely stay with me forever.

"I'm happy when, if, I make ISU and the department (at least) a little bigger, badder, and better. That's the audacity of my hope.

"But also, acting chair educated me, schooled me once again, to the greatness of the department, (re)connected me to the fact that I have dear friends as colleagues, and elevated me in a myriad of unpredictable ways. Now, as I continue to work toward living a making and contributing to a better tomorrow, my passion, joy, and corazón can't stop, won't stop."

Though Cruz has been a faculty member in the department since 1999, he says his objective never changes. He remains as dedicated as ever to teaching, mentoring, challenging *e/racism* as a creative writer, and righting matters as if his very livelihood depends upon it.

However, Cruz is also looking forward to his next chapter. New day means new fate. "I am looking forward to witnessing the further growth and development of the department and English studies," he said. "'Word is bond,' I like to say. So I have no doubt we will, like always, continue to build a diverse an extraordinary community of Redbirds who will soar despite what they are going through. As one of the flock embracing how we keep advancing and helping others live during these unprecedented times, I would like to wish the entire ISU community peace and much love."

Teaching online during the pandemic

Associate Professor in the Department of English Joyce R. Walker offers advice on distance and virtual learning

"It will be OK."

I've been saying this as a mantra—when I talk to students, when I'm trying to encourage myself, when I'm meeting and planning with colleagues or mentoring graduate students. I say it, even when I can't really believe it. Even when I can't see how it could possibly be ok, or how it will ever be ok in the future.

I mention this mantra, because I want to point out that teaching online during the pandemic is not the same as learning to teach online in a more regular situation. We're not just moving from face-to-face to online – we're doing it (and have been doing it) under situations of stress and uncertainty that are completely beyond our experience. And this means that when we evaluate what we can, or should, or shouldn't do in our teaching right now, it seems to me that we need to be judging our work and our efforts under a different set of standards.



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For me, these standards begin with key efforts that are both responsive to the situation and in line with my core teaching goals. They include helping people to focus on the work at hand, to find ways to create schedules and habits of mind that help them to move beyond basic coping skills and towards more productive learning and creating. But I also realize that this is difficult during the pandemic, because the energy it takes to cope with this level of difference and uncertainty is a powerful enemy of productive focus. My goals also include efforts to help people make meaningful human connections, the kind that can help with learning. Because all learning is effective, and feeling disconnected from the world can cause us to struggle with basic learning activities such as remembering what we read or making connections between different concepts.

My strategies for building learning spaces during the pandemic definitely feel rushed and emergent. Unfinished. Experimental. I've taught three classes online during the pandemic so far and will work on two more during the fall semester. I've experimented with tools like Flipgrid, Zoom, ReggieNet, my phone (texting), and email. I've created online tutorials and tried to build spaces for small group discussions (because these tend to work better than large groups for synchronous meetings). I've been surprised by how difficult it seems to be to keep students interested and connected—even harder than teaching online in more regular times, which can definitely be harder than when teaching face-to-face. I continue to focus on my key teaching goals, but it seems like the students I'm teaching need very different kinds of support than they did when I went online again in 2018, after a 10-year break from online teaching.

One thing I keep thinking about constantly is how to match the affordance of various spaces and tools with the goals I have for teaching and learning. For example, this fall I'll be experimenting with an older technology, synchronous chat (rather than video), as a way to get participants to see how their words evolve in discussions, in collaboration and conflict with the words of others. Using these older online technologies is particularly interesting to me, because it harkens back to when I first worked in online learning environments (as both a graduate student and teacher from (1995-2001). One of the things I learned during these early experiences was that we can connect online—even in low bandwidth ways like synchronous chat spaces. And these connections can be powerful. But they evolve differently, and we experience them differently—temporally, emotionally, physically—as our body/brains struggle to make sense of different kinds of information and different kinds of spaces. Because synchronous chatting is so different from the way that most of us experience conversation, I think it can actually help us to focus on the differences we're experiencing. And this focus on making meaning in new ways allows us to abandon the effort to recreate some kind of face-to-face experience, which is mostly not possible. If we abandon the effort to "make everything as close as possible to what we know," and instead focus on creating and experiencing learning in new ways, we can explore how our basic teaching values might emerge and transform in these new environments. We can explore tools that might work for us and for our students, but we can also know that this unfamiliar process will result in some failure, at least some of the time. And maybe that's ok.

New faculty member spotlight

Welcome to ISU, Professor Eda Ozyesilpinar

The ISU community welcomes Professor Eda Ozyesilpinar as the new assistant professor in rhetoric and composition studies. Ozyesilpinar earned her Ph.D. in rhetorics, communication, and information design in 2018 from Clemson University. Her research, situated within the larger context of histories of rhetoric, centers on border, digital-cultural rhetorics, and non-Western rhetorics. She studies spatiality and materiality of border violence and performs rhetorical cartography to be attentive to the relationship between spaces/places, borders/boundaries, and bodies. Her work aims to explore ways to move beyond or away from the divisive force of borders/boundaries and explore meaningful ways to engage with non-Western and underrepresented voices, histories, cultural practices of meaning-making to humanize borders/boundaries.

Her co-authored book chapter "Through the Magic Glass of Sufism: Studying Orientalism in Sufism," is part of the recently published edited collection *The Routledge Handbook of Comparative World Rhetorics*. Her academic and creative work has appeared in *Kairos: A*

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Anna Kurowicka. "Polish Asexualities: Catholic Religiosity and Asexual Online Activisms in Poland" in *LGBTI+ Activism in Post-Soviet (Post-Socialist) Space*. Edited by Radzhana Buyantueva and Maryna Shevtsova. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 289-311.

Amy Verhaeghe, and Sharifa Patel. "On the Im/possibilities of Antiracist and Decolonial Publishing as Pedagogical Praxis." *Feminist Teacher* 28.2 - 3 (2019) (Special Issue on Performance in the Feminist Classroom): 79-90.

Two pieces translated into Portuguese and published in *Assexualidade: Subjetividades Emergentes no Século XXI*. Ed. Paulo Victor Bezerra. Londrina, Brazil: Eduel.

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- Henderson, S. (2019). *Second Language Writing Instruction in Global Contexts: Language Teacher Preparation and Development*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
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- Van Calbergh, Michael. Poems “Third Shift Morning” and “The Kitchen Table Makes an Offering”, *Rappahannock Review*, issue 7.1. rappahannockreview.com/issue-7-1/contents/poetry/michael-vancalbergh/, <http://rappahannockreview.com/issue-7-1/contents/poetry/michael-vancalbergh-2/>.

Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy, *Rhetorics Change/Rhetoric's Change*, and *Immediacy*. She is currently working on a collaborative book project investigating the coloniality of the current strategic border-violence by working with and for the indigenous and migrating



population of the El Paso-Juarez region. Through her leadership, this project was awarded the 2019 Career Advancement Grant by the Special Interest Group on the Design of Communication (SIGDOC) sponsored by the Association of Computing Machinery (ACM).

Before joining the Department of English at Illinois State University, Ozyesilpinar has developed and taught graduate seminars on histories and historiographies of rhetorics, border rhetorics, and digital-cultural rhetorics. She also has taught workplace writing and technical communication at the undergraduate level. As a scholar-teacher, she is committed to diversity, social justice, and supporting students with the utmost respect to their diverse cultural and linguistic

backgrounds. These are the core values that drew her to ISU and the Department of English. She is looking forward to joining the fantastic community of scholars and teachers in our department and ISU. Ozyesilpinar is from Izmir, Turkey, and a proud dog mom. As someone who has only lived in sunny, humid, and warm places (including her hometown of Izmir), she is excited about her first Midwest winter experience.

Publications Unit alumni showcase featuring August Schiess

By Morgan Folgers

August (Cassens) Schiess '13 is an Illinois State University alumnus of the publishing studies program in the Department of English who spent her time in her undergraduate career maximizing her experience as a production assistant at the Publications Unit, a Bone Student Scholar, and a night editor and columnist for *The Vidette*.

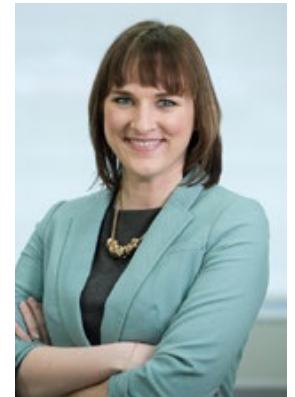
Currently, she is the director of social media at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she has spent time overseeing the strategic vision of the University of Illinois through a social media lens while curating content for accounts — including photography, video, design, and writing. Her experience in the publishing studies program solidified her skills in a variety of means that aided in her professional development.

Throughout Schiess's career, she has managed and developed a Coordinated Science Laboratory (CSL) website, received recognition for archaea and neuron coding-based publications, served on the ISU English Alumni Advisory Board, and worked in various media communications specialist positions. Schiess has expressed a passion for “strategically using writing, design, photography, and video to effectively tell stories on social media.”

To hear more about her experiences during her undergraduate career and post-undergraduate, we had the opportunity to interview Schiess.

What attracted you to publishing studies as a major?

The publishing studies program is unique, and as a senior in high school with a passion for English and a role as editor-in-chief of the yearbook, it seemed like the perfect combination of my interests. I loved the opportunity to pursue a traditional English degree with an additional layer of publishing skills. I'm sure it comes as no surprise that I love books—and not just the content of the books. I love the construction, design, and editorial choices of the books themselves. The stories we publish and share are powerful. They shape our society and collective narrative. I was eager to learn more, and I knew this degree would allow me to do that.



What experiences from your college career have been most integral in shaping the course of your professional life?

My time at the Publications Unit and *The Vidette* were truly integral in setting me up for success after I graduated. I learned practical and professional skills that directly translated to the work I did and continue to do in my career. My first employers were impressed I had the skill set that I did, and it's all thanks to the mentors and supervisors I had in the English department and these two jobs. They invested in me. They taught me practical skills and also—and this was important—how to act in a workplace, set and achieve goals, make good judgments, and work independently. Even something as seemingly simple as learning how to introduce myself in a professional setting or craft a professional and articulate email helped me immensely. I'm truly indebted to the guidance and support I received as a student. I can't stress enough how vital those experiences were in helping me get my first job, which has propelled me to achieve everything since.

Please describe your professional journey to your current field.

A week after I graduated, I went to work as a media communications specialist at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, a research lab at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. There, I was able to employ the exact skills I learned in the publishing studies program—editing, layout and design, writing, printing processes, editorial judgment, and more. I also picked up skills along the way, like photography, event planning, and social media. I had to employ critical thinking and research skills right away too. I was writing about extremely complex science. Translating science for a general audience took a lot of work, and I thank the English component of my degree for my ability to do so.

After that, I transitioned to a communications coordinator position at the Coordinated Science Laboratory, another research lab at Illinois. I used many of the same skills while fine-tuning my skills in social media. That helped lead into my current role: director of social media for the university. In this position, I set the strategic vision and create content for the main University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign social media accounts. While I work to stay on top of the trends of each social media platform, my main goal is to use social media as a strategic tool to tell the Illinois story.

How did your experiences as a publishing studies student at Illinois State University shape your skill sets in your current position?

When I graduated in 2013, we weren't having serious discussions about social media as a business tool, but my skill sets from my degree have propelled me in that direction. I think I know more about editing and style guides than nearly all of my colleagues — who are professionals in communications — and that helps me create consistent, clear, and articulate social media messages. I also use my layout and design skills, especially what I learned at the Publications Unit, to create content for social media. I think one of the skills you also learn in publishing studies is to think about your audience's needs, from creating good page margins to publishing compelling stories, and I think about my audience's needs with every single social media post I craft. Creating good content on social media is truly like creating a mini publication every time. It has to be well designed, well thought out, and well written. So, in that sense, my experiences as a publishing studies student were enormously helpful.

How have you used your skills to mentor other individuals in your field?

During my six years in the workplace, I've had the opportunity to mentor several interns and colleagues. It's a great privilege and great responsibility, as I know how much my life and career were influenced by the mentoring I received during my time at ISU, especially at the Publications Unit. I try to lead by example and give people I mentor the guidance and tools they need to thrive on their own. I think people grow if they're given the tools to succeed and then the autonomy to flourish.

What does a typical work day look like for you?

My days are often a collection of attending meetings to plan and brainstorm content and campaigns, responding to emails from communicators across campus seeking assistance on social media, and, most importantly, creating and posting content on each of our social

Additional faculty achievements

- Professor Joe Amato has been nominated for the University Outstanding Creative Activity Award by the College of Arts and Sciences this year.
- Professor Kass Fleisher has been named the recipient of the Outstanding College Service Award.
- Professor Angela Haas has been nominated as the Outstanding University Teacher (Category I) by the College of Arts and Sciences. Additionally, she, along with her co-editor Michelle F. Eble, won the 2020 Conference on College Composition and Communication Award for Best Original Collection of Essays in Technical or Scientific Communication for *Key Theoretical Frameworks: Teaching Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century*. The collection provides models for putting socially-just theories and methodologies into practice when designing and teaching technical communication curricula. Contributors from 13 different universities—including our own Professor Elise Verzosa Hurley, Professor Barbi Smyser-Fauble, and Professor Emeritus Jerry Savage—offer diverse frameworks that support instructors invested in teaching practitioners how to be socially-just technical communicators and global citizens.
- Professor K. Aaron Smith has been selected as the Outstanding College Teacher (Humanities) for 2020-2021.
- Professor Amy Robillard's essay, "These Five Hours," originally published on *Full Grown People* in January, 2018, has been listed as a Notable essay in *The Best American Essays 2019*, edited by Rebecca Solnit.
- Professor Gabriel Gudding is translating two books of poetry from Norwegian, working closely with the authors: Gunnar Wærness's *Venn med alle* (Cappelen Damm 2018) and Maiken Horn Bolset's *Narr* (Cappelen Damm 2016).

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- Professor Ela Przybylo has been named the recipient of the 2020 College of Arts and Sciences Excellence Award for Outstanding Scholarly Achievement of the Year by a Pre-tenured Faculty Member. She, as the editor of the journal *Feral Feminisms*, is also proud to announce Issue 9 on “State Killing: Queer and Women of Color Manifestas against U.S. Violence and Oppression,” guest edited by Annie Hill, is now [live](#). She also received an Emerging Open Scholarship Award Honorable Mention from the Canadian Social Knowledge Institute.
- Professor Robert McLaughlin, professor emeritus, was interviewed for an [article](#) on Stephen Sondheim in *The Guardian* (London): “Isn’t it rich? Why Stephen Sondheim, at nearly 90, is having a new heyday.”
- English Education Advisor Alan Lin and Professors Heidi Bowman, Elizabeth Cachey, Kristen Marshall, Roberta Seelinger Trites, and Kristin Zona are 2020 Impact Award winners for their “important contributions this past year in the lives of our first-year students.”

media platforms. I work extremely close with my creative team every day—constantly brainstorming and crafting posts, arranging photo shoots, and working on graphics or other designed materials. It’s a fast-paced workflow, and even though my main job is to strategize and post the content for the day, it’s constantly changing and evolving because the type of content we post is always different. I spend my free time seeking out new stories to share, monitoring the platforms, and gathering analytics on our posts.

Because of your familiarity with the publishing studies program at Illinois State University, what advice do you have for current ISU students looking to pursue a career in the publishing field?

My career path from the publishing studies program might be considered non-traditional — it’s not in a typical publishing industry. But at the same time, I think it was a completely natural progression. The publishing studies program provides sought-after practical knowledge and deep critical thinking skills that translate to all sorts of careers. My advice would be to not limit yourself to thinking you have to have a certain career or follow a certain path with this degree. Instead, use your skill set to explore new opportunities and continue to grow.

Find additional [information online](#) about the publishing studies sequence. For more information about Publications Unit internship and assistantship opportunities, contact Steve Halle, director of the Publications Unit, at cshalle@IllinoisState.edu or (309) 438-7481. Follow the Publications Unit on Twitter at [@PubUnit_ISU](https://twitter.com/PubUnit_ISU) or visit our [website](#).

Congratulations to graduate student Charley Koenig, who published her first chapbook

Charley Koenig’s debut chapbook, *All That Unpleasantness*, is a collection of non-traditional fictions and hybrid pieces that juxtapose unconventional forms and women’s experiences. Meant to contribute to ongoing dialogues about feminisms and power dynamics, these pieces



explore topics like trauma, childhood, illness, mental health, and the aggressions against bodies positioned within sexist and misogynistic structures. Koenig’s work adds to the varied and complicated constructions of woman and contributes to the dismantling of master narratives of dominant masculinity at work in contemporary times.

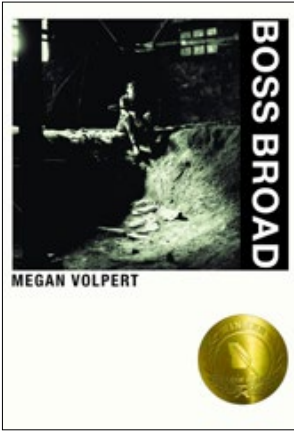
Over the course of her master’s program in the Department of English at Illinois State University, Koenig found herself continually returning to stories of women’s oppression and trauma, while also seeking out different, but more authentic, ways to convey these experiences.

Looking ahead, Koenig would like to more deeply explore unconventional fictions and hybrid genres and their potential in respect to representation as she begins the Ph.D. program in creative writing this fall. In particular, she wants to consider how speculative fiction might factor into her pursuit of complicated representations of women, and how looking forward with this “future fiction” might help us as writers, creators, readers, and human beings to move toward a future in which we are more critical of the ways we position women and other bodies that identify with the systemic and harrowing problems of sexism, misogyny, and dominant masculinity.

Alumni spotlight

Megan Volpert '03

Megan Volpert’s latest book, *Boss Broad* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2019), has won a Georgia Author of the Year Award. Illinois State’s own Professor Kass Fleisher lent her name to the back cover in praise of Volpert’s unique approach to pop culture: “This Springsteen Catechism for Youth; this apostrophe to The Boss, blessed by Pope Colbert; this time-warped documentary



fiction; this cacophony of voices disrupting notions of listening, hearing; this queering of Bruce’s lyrics until we become champions of intersectional justice; this fandom that exposes us all—destabilizes our fantasies of the real and shows us what, in ritual worship, destroys us every day. Read this, say three Hail Marys, and loan *Boss Broad* to a friend who knows that suffering which is sacred. Amen.”

The alum acknowledges Fleisher’s book, *Talking Out of School: Memoirs of an Educated Woman* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2009), as a deep inspiration for the tone and content of her latest work. As an undergraduate at ISU, Volpert pursued an interdisciplinary route of study that included many courses in the politics and philosophy departments, as well as graduate-level seminars in English. She credits her time as captain of the debate team in Normal as the experience her

instinct for social justice needed to take root and flourish, and the seminar she recalls most fondly is Professor Cynthia Huff’s class on women and autobiography. There are hints of Volpert’s now trademark modes of analysis and punk humor in her senior capstone project, which was a deconstruction of gender expressions in *Alice in Wonderland*.

Volpert went on to earn an MFA in creative writing at Louisiana State University, where she studied primarily with Laura Mullen. This will be her 15th year of service to Fulton County Schools in Atlanta, where she teaches World Lit, Journalism and Public Speaking, and was awarded Teacher of the Year in 2014. Volpert is currently researching her next book, “Perfume,” for Bloomsbury Academic’s Object Lessons series, slated for publication in 2022.



Amy Outland '07

Amy Outland is a freelance writer and editor for both Writer.ly and Gather.com, and has recently self-published her sixth novel. It is a work of fiction and the last installment in the *I’m Not Broken* (2015) series. Her latest book, *Reaching For Your Heart*, was published in 2020.



Amy has also had several poems published in Chicago-based 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*, *Poetic Hustles: Volume 2: Life Matters*, and *Millennial Voice: Why Do Millennials Think That*.

Amy also works as a service excellence representative at Franciscan Health in Olympia Fields.

Jonah Mixon-Webster honored with Windham-Campbell Prize

By Rachel Hatch

Illinois State University alumnus Jonah Mixon-Webster, Ph.D '20, has been awarded a coveted 2020 Windham-Campbell Prize.

One of only eight winners from across the globe, Mixon-Webster is a recent recipient of the Ph.D. in English Studies with an emphasis in creative writing from Illinois State’s Department of English. His debut poetry collection *Stereo(TYPE)* focuses on the ongoing water

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“Slipping Past the Rowlock” (poem). *Washington Square Review*, Issue 44, Fall 2019.
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- “Harriet Paints the Churching of Women,” *DIALOGIST*, February 2020. dialogist.org/poetry/2020-week-06-hannah-kroonblawd.
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(poem) 'Like Life Itself', *An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry: Prism* (41). August, 2019. Bower Bird Press: p. 53.
(poem) 'Rain', *An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry: Prism* (42). October, 2019. Bower Bird Press: p. 116.
- Tidmarsh, Bryanna. Stories and copyediting for *The Flame Magazine*. 29 October 2019.
- Trujillo, Thelma. "Butler and bætt Bodið: Constructing, Performing, and (Mis)Reading the Female Body in Ælfric's 'Life of Saint Agnes'," *International Congress on Medieval Studies*, Kalamazoo, MI. Accepted for May 2020.
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crisis in his hometown of Flint, Michigan, and systemic racism within the architecture of the current collective crisis. The collection was also awarded the Sawtooth Poetry Prize and the prestigious PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award for Poetry.

"This prize represents the immanent gifts and responsibilities of the craft of poetry," said Mixon-Webster, who dedicated the award to the ongoing resistance in Flint. "If there is ever a time to use our voices and bodies to form against oppression, it is now."

Honoring a handful of talented writers of fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and drama from around the globe, the \$165,000 Donald Windham-Sandy M. Campbell Literature Prizes at Yale University call attention to literary achievement and provides writers with the opportunity to focus on their work independent of financial concerns.

In recognizing Mixon-Webster's work, the committee called *Stereo(TYPE)* "an artful and powerful work of poetic activism." Infusing oral history, government documentation, photography, and found text, the work tells the story of the continuing struggle in Flint. "Intimate and violent, provocative and tender, mythic and ritualistic, *Stereo(TYPE)* compels its readers to become witnesses to environmental and social evil, and in so doing, to choose between radical solidarity with Flint—or complicity with those who have enabled the government's relentless predation and persecution of its people."

Mixon-Webster is co-leader of the PEN America Detroit Chapter and is a 2019-2020 Writing for Justice Fellow. He is an alumnus of Eastern Michigan University.



Professor Deb Riggert-Kieffer, Becca Olson, and Samantha Moe lead a collaborative project in ENG 101

On March 3, 2020, under the instruction of Professor Deb Riggert-Kieffer, Becca Olson, and Samantha Moe, four sections of English 101 gathered to write letters for Letters Against Depression (LAD), a non-profit charity. Anyone—not just people who suffer from depression—can request letters of encouragement for themselves from LAD. Volunteers send the



From left, Becca Olson, Deb Riggert-Kieffer, and Samantha Moe

letters to the organization, and the organization addresses the letters to the people. Students not only wrote a personalized letter of encouragement and inspiration to a person they selected to address, but also turned plain note-cards and construction paper into beautiful motivational artwork to send along with the letters as an additional source of encouragement. LAD had given permission for 70 letters for distribution.

The idea of this collaborative activity originated in Olson's English 101 class, which includes a writing activity that engages students in composing letters for LAD to practice a real-world genre. While most students are familiar with the genre of the friendly letter and several of its common conventions, writing for LAD offers students a unique situation—the opportunity to uplift the recipient. During the activity, students decide if they would like to send their letter to the intended recipient. Several colleagues have invited Olson into their

classes to implement this activity as a guest-teacher. For this past spring semester, Olson decided to extend an invitation to combine classes with other instructors who teach sections at the same time as her. Once the invitation was accepted, the instructors and students looked forward to this shared collaboration and excitedly prepared for the group class.

The timing of this event was incredible, as it was one of the last classes before Spring Break, which turned out to be one of the last times the classes met face-to-face that semester as ISU moved to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The recipients of these letters would have received them in a time when they most likely needed the extra encouragement, and the participants of the event had this last moment of shared collaboration to help them endure the next few months.

Visit the [website](#) for more information about requesting a letter for yourself or volunteering for LAD.

Congratulations to Jennifer Tullos for winning four departmental scholarships

Jennifer Tullos, who received her Ph.D. in children's literature in early of summer 2020, earned four scholarships offered by the Department of English in the spring of 2020, including the Taimi Ranta Teaching Award and the Diversity and Equity Teaching Award.

When asked about her teaching philosophy, she said, "My teaching philosophy aspires to be queer, feminist, and anti-racist. For me, this means that I attempt to decenter myself and reallocate power inside my classroom (while still acknowledging the institutional power I have). I ask students to join me in questioning and problematizing our own ideologies along with the ideologies of each text as an attempt to analyze whose stories get told and, just as importantly, *how* they get told and who does the telling." She lays emphasis in incorporating diversity as a continual effort to



achieve an anti-racist pedagogy. She also encourages her students to think about the praxis of their work and how they might transfer their work/learning outside of the classroom. She adds, "I also want to note that anti-racist teaching cannot happen without anti-racist, decolonial assessment practices. So, if a teacher wants to differentiate their assignments, they must also be ready to differentiate how they assess. For me, this means inviting students to be partners in assessment. Together, students and I create varied criteria for what 'success' means in the context of a particular assignment (based on research the students conduct), and then we strategize about opportunities for them to demonstrate their learning."

Tullos' words of advice to pedagogues seeking to incorporate diversity into their syllabi is to rely on their research skills to read widely, especially works by BIPOC scholars, teachers, and thinkers, and interrogate their own ideologies before putting them into work through learning activities, assignments, and assessments that ask students to do that same interrogative work. She believes "a core component to diverse, anti-racist teaching is creating an environment where everything is constantly questioning everything, expressing and annotating their own thinking and practices, and then actively working to improve."

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Additional graduate student achievements

- Charles Woods was invited to join the *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy Journal PraxisWiki* Review Board. He was also selected as a Computers and Composition Digital Press Digital Fellow for the 2019-2020 academic year.
- Jillian Merrifield (Ph.D. candidate with emphasis in creative writing) was awarded the Ora Bretall Scholarship for outstanding graduate students whose thesis or dissertation project promises significant contribution to the development of educational theory and practice.
- Nkeiruka Nwobodo (M.A. student with emphasis in technical writing and rhetorics) was awarded the Lela Winegarner Scholarship for outstanding international graduate students who plan to use their education in a service capacity.
- Mijan Rahman, Ph.D. candidate, was awarded a 2020 TESOL Professional Development Scholarship by TESOL International Association to help him attend the TESOL International Convention and English Language Expo to be held in Denver in spring 2020, where he was scheduled present twice.
- Danielle Sutton was awarded a Dissertation Completion Grant from the Graduate School.
- Maryna Teplova was awarded a University Club Scholarship. Additionally, she was elected to the ISU Graduate Student Advisory Council, the CCCC NNEswIs Standing Group Executive Committee, and the ISU Writing Program Teaching and Learning Facilities Committee. She would also like to highlight her volunteer efforts as a guest pianist at local senior facilities, a language partner program volunteer with INTO, the Normal Public Library book sale, and bake sales for both INTO and SEGS.

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On giving

Professor Marla Lowenthal

Professor Marla Lowenthal '73 has traveled the world, taught U.S. military members living abroad in Europe, and holds four advanced degrees. Her worldly perspective and immense wealth of knowledge developed following her collegiate years at Illinois State, which remain the most formative of her experiences.



“I came to Illinois State during tumultuous times,” said Lowenthal, referring to the May 1970 protests at Kent State and Jackson State that resulted in student fatalities. “But I had the best professors who were humane, helped us deal with the issues we had, and ultimately changed my life.”

One such professor, the late Professor Charles Harris, introduced Lowenthal to absurdism, which became a guiding philosophy in her life. Others nurtured Lowenthal’s desire to learn more about herself and individuals through literature’s lens. As a student at Illinois State, she created a self-directed course of African-American and women’s

literature to advance her scholarship, in a time when non-white, non-male writers were not widely studied.

Lowenthal’s gratitude for her Illinois State experience inspired her to make a generous estate gift commitment to the University’s English department in 2017. She added to her commitment in 2019 with the hope her investment will continue Illinois State’s tradition of excellence in English education.

With a Ph.D. in international multi-cultural education, Lowenthal is equipped to be a faculty voice herself in today’s changing climate. Lowenthal taught for 22 years at Menlo College in Atherton, California. Though formally retired, Lowenthal loves teaching so much that she currently teaches communication and rhetoric part-time at the University of San Francisco and San Francisco State University. Her students grapple with issues of race and gender, just as Lowenthal and her peers did in the 1970s.

“Literature teaches you about people more than anything else. If you want to learn about human beings and their cultures, read literature. Literature helps you discover more about yourself and understand the world around you,” said Lowenthal, who sees language as the origin of racial divide, as well as the answer to becoming a more humane society. With her estate commitment, Lowenthal hopes to gift future Redbirds this framework for understanding, just as she received through her Illinois State University education.

Faculty spotlight

Congratulations to Professor Lisya Seloni for becoming full professor

Professor Lisya Seloni has recently been promoted to full professor and is excited to continue her scholarship and teaching in her new rank. She has been teaching courses in applied linguistics, TESOL, and mentoring numerous graduate students in the Department of English at Illinois State University since 2010.

Seloni is invested in studying the diverse literate practices of multilingual writers in higher education to better understand the complex processes involved in writers’ textual production, knowledge making and positionality within their disciplinary communities. Her scholarship deals with four strands of research associated with applied linguistics and writing studies: (1) cultural-historic activity theory and ethnography as a means to understand writing practices of transnational writers, (2) second language writing instruction and critical pedagogy oriented teacher preparation, (3) the roles of reflexivity and life writing in understanding literacy experiences of translanguaging writers, and (4) language ideologies and policies in public and private spheres. Her most recent co-edited book, *Second Language Writing Instruction in Global Contexts: English Language Teacher Preparation and Development* (2020), was recently published by Multilingual Matters. This book explored the complexity of second



language writing teacher education in non-English dominant contexts where teachers face a number of challenges to enhance learners' opportunities to write in their second language based on the disconnect between mainstream pedagogies around writing instruction and the local needs of students, language policies, and language practices in local contexts.

Seloni's forthcoming publications include a co-authored chapter titled "Unpacking Multilingual Writing Teacher Identities: A Collaborative Narrative Inquiry" in Mariya Tseptsura and Todd Ruecker's edited collection (Utah State University Press) on non-native English speaking writing instructors, and a chapter titled "Arguing-to-learn and learning-to-argue: Analysis of Pre-service Teachers' Reflective Writing Journals" in Alan Hirvela and Diane Belcher's forthcoming edited collection (University of Michigan Press) on argumentative writing in second

language. She is currently also involved in a research project with a colleague from University of Rhode Island investigating what anti-racist pedagogies look like in second language teacher education courses focusing on pre-service teachers' literacy around linguistic discrimination and other monolingual ideologies in the classroom while working with linguistically minoritized students. More specifically, they focus on how teachers' understanding of cultural and racial identities evolve through the course of a semester as they uncover intersections of their privilege and marginalization, and how strategically pairing texts from authors of color could push against racist attitudes and disrupt white supremacy in second language teacher education.

Originally from Turkey, Seloni moved to United States, her adopted home, in 2001 to pursue graduate work. She obtained her doctoral degree in second language studies at The Ohio State University. Internationally, she taught teacher education courses and writing in South Korea and Turkey. As a transitional scholar and a first-generation college student, Seloni recognizes the challenges and intricacies of an academic life that requires shuttling between different communities and languages. One piece of advice she has for graduate students who would soon be on the job market is to find strong allies and co-mentors who will support them professionally and hold an open space for them to grow in their unique way. She recommends always triangulating advice by asking fellow graduate students, dissertation adviser, another committee member and junior faculty. Being on the job market is overwhelming and searching for jobs in the post-COVID era may be more challenging. In unprecedented times like these, she emphasizes the importance of being flexible, creative and open minded about the first job.

Obsidian wins NEA grant

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has announced *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora* is the recipient of a \$50,000 NEA CARES grant. The journal is currently published by Illinois State's Publications Unit. Established in 1975, *Obsidian* is an influential anchor of arts and scholarship for African diaspora literature and has a diverse readership of 20,000 from across the United States and around the world.

Professor Duriel E. Harris, editor-in-chief of *Obsidian*, is the principal investigator of the grant. "We are very proud of the outstanding work that Professor Harris is doing," said Diane Zoksy, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of social work. "*Obsidian* is dedicated to the work of peoples and ideas that have migrated across the globe from Africa and meets an important need in our society."

The two-year NEA grant will partially fund the part-time position of a managing editor (ME) for *Obsidian*. The ME will serve as the primary administrator for the journal's day-to-day operations. The College of Arts and Sciences is delighted to support the success of the grant by partnering with the NEA. "The College of Arts and Sciences is thrilled about this opportunity for Harris to take *Obsidian* to even greater levels of distinction and proudly offers its resources for such a deserving endeavor," said Joseph Blaney, associate dean of the

- Tiffany Bishop, Reda Mohammed, and Alice Vermillion are 2020 Impact Award winners for their "important contributions this past year in the lives of our first-year students."

Retiring faculty

Professor Janice Neuleib

Janice Neuleib, professor emeritus in the Department of English, retired at the end of 2020 spring semester after serving the department since 1970. In her 50-year career at ISU she worked extensively with the teaching of writing, pedagogy,



and British literature. Neuleib's contributions include initiating the Writing Center (1976-1986), which became the University Center for Learning Assistance in 1986, and directing the Writing Programs for the department and University (1996-2006). She has also created and edited *The Mercury Reader*, an anthology of short essays on varied topics. Additionally, she has worked closely with teachers at all levels through a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the Illinois State Writing Project (with a National Writing Project grant), the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, and the National Council of Teachers of English.

She appreciates the experience gained from working with 54 doctoral students and acknowledges the diverse areas of research and teaching the de-

partment provides. On asking how her transition to retirement was, she said, "I do everything else I have done. I just don't have to go to meetings." She added that she is looking forward to this phase to make sense and relate all the threads of her research work.

Professor Marsha Sharp

Professor Marsha Sharp came to the Department of English in the fall of 2006 after six years in higher education in Oklahoma. In her 14 years here, she taught primarily writing courses, English 145 and 145.13. Before that, she spent nearly 20 years in the securities business in Denver, Colorado, and raised two



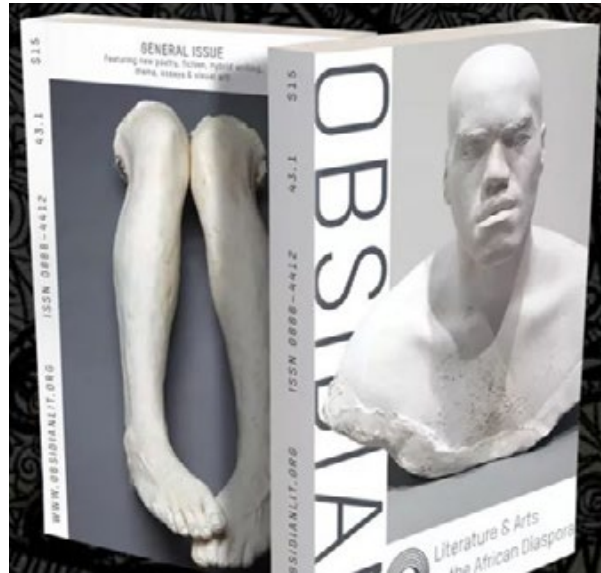
sons. The most memorable parts of her teaching career, as she recollects, always centered around students' "lightbulb" moments—moments when the student grasps the concept just explained by the instructor well enough—as they matured as thinkers and writers. She is immensely grateful for the comradery of the NTT instructor core whose invaluable support and encouragement sustained her, especially through the aftermath of the Oklahoma tornado in 2011.

Retirement has been a challenging endeavor during the pandemic, she says, and her plans to continue her love of travel, especially in Europe, remain on hold for the moment. Books (stacks of them), crosswords, plants on the patio, and movies she had missed are giving her company these days.

Professor Claire Lamonica

The department extends its gratitude to Professor Claire Lamonica, director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (CTLT), on her retirement and contributions to the institution. She joined the department in 1998 as the associate director of the Writing Program and supervised clinical experiences for

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Created by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the arts endowment supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit www.arts.gov to learn more.

Undergraduate spotlight

Michael Spell wins the Fulbright Scholarship for teaching in Brazil

Michael Spell, a senior English major, received a Fulbright Scholarship to teach in Brazil starting fall 2020. While Brazil was the central motivator for his application, the more he learned about the Commission, the more ecstatic he became about the opportunity to be a part of something as big as Fulbright. The resources for professional development, employment, research, and several possibilities for working with the global network of Fulbright Scholars is hard to wrap one's head around. Spell can't wait to share experience and knowledge with other members of this network, both in Brazil and for the rest of his life. He's also looking forward to his supplemental project where he would volunteer at a domestic violence shelter located in his city, learning how to better support those who have experiences both similar and vastly different from his. The thing he is most excited about is building intimate and professional relationships with his students, colleagues, and those in the communities he will interact with, and seeing the ways in which they can help him become a better educator. With minors and endorsements in Spanish and teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), Spell hopes to become certified in more languages and start his own language school.

The biggest piece of advice Spell has for aspiring Fulbright grantees is to do extensive research on the countries that you would like to apply for and demonstrate that you have done your research in your interviews and the pieces you write for your application.

College of Arts and Sciences and professor of communication.

The ME will also be responsible for implementing *Obsidian's* comprehensive marketing strategy, coordinating all outreach strategies, and managing all editorial activities, including print production and website management. "With the support of the NEA, *Obsidian* will continue investing in the literary ecosystem of Black voices, serving as a crucial resource for scholarship and publishing in the arts and African diaspora for years to come," wrote Harris in her grant application.





For more information, visit
Homecoming.IllinoisState.edu

English education majors from 2005 to 2006. She was named interim director of CTLT in 2012 before being named director in 2013.

As director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, Lamonica provided vision and leadership for the unit; worked collaboratively to provide direction for the center's staff; performed administrative duties; contributed to the unit's menu of programming, resources,



and services; administered grants and awards; and served as chair of the University Teaching Committee.

Being an ardent "nester," she plans to spend time and money on her house after retirement.

