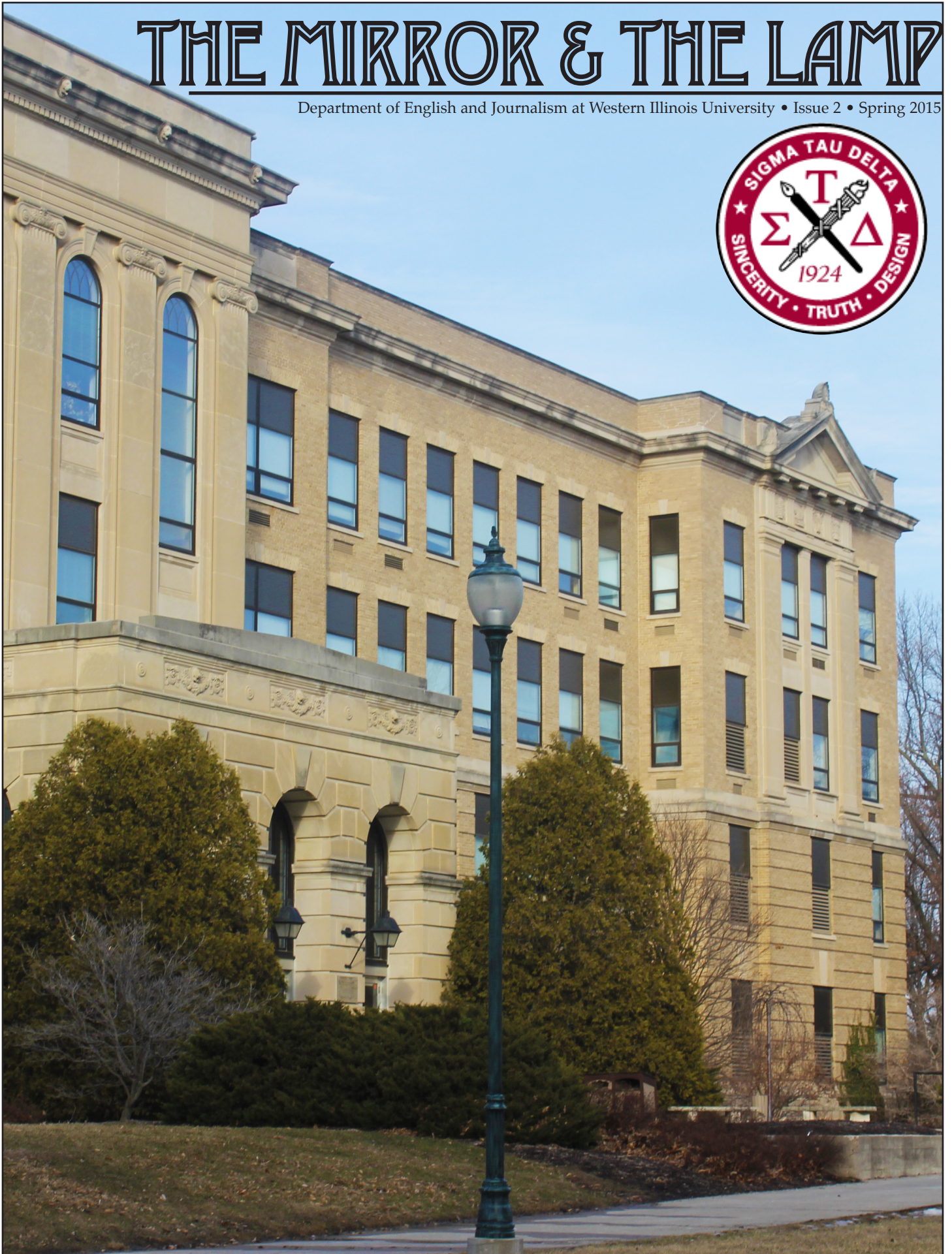


# THE MIRROR & THE LAMP

Department of English and Journalism at Western Illinois University • Issue 2 • Spring 2015



# A Letter From the Chair



by Mark Mossman

The great Basil Bunting often gave advice to other poets. A former conscientious objector, spy, political prisoner, journalist, music critic, and Quaker, it seems likely that Basil Bunting had a lot of advice to give. Mostly, what Bunting said to young writers was quite simple: "Compose aloud; poetry is sound."

Poetry is sound—it is something that is meant to be composed aloud and then read aloud. It is sound, music, utterance.

This line, for example, is never to be read in silence:

*I saw the best minds of my generation  
destroyed by madness*

Nor these:

*Daddy, I have had to kill you.  
You died before I had time—  
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,  
Ghastly statue with one gray toe  
Big as a Frisco seal*

Nor these:

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and  
wattles made:  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the  
honey-bee;  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

Nor these:

*I do not mix  
love with pity  
nor hate with scorn  
and if you would know me  
look into the entrails of Uranus  
where the restless oceans pound.*

Poetry is sound, and writing is connected, so intimately, with the music in our heads.

And as we are a department uniquely concerned with writing and, indeed, with poetry, I believe that each year we fill Simpkins Hall with a very significant, distinct kind of sound. It is what we do. We make sound, and in our reading and in our composing, amazingly we make actual meaning through sound.

We do exactly what Auden said we would always do (both to the poems of Yeats and to the poetry of all of us):

The words of a dead man  
Are modified in the guts of the living.

2 *The Mirror & The Lamp*

...  
*Follow, poet, follow right  
To the bottom of the night,  
rejoice;  
With the farming of a verse  
Make a vineyard of the curse,  
Sing of human unsuccess  
Let the healing fountain start,  
In the prison of his days  
Teach the free man how to praise.*

This year has been a good example of what I am talking about here. With the Boiler Room Series, and with help from the University Art Gallery, these sounds have come from our students and our colleagues in the forms of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. With the Lola & Austin Case Writers Series, and our excellent Foundation Office, these sounds have come from the numerous readings made by prestigious visiting writers and critics, including Lev Grossman, Roxane Gay, Rachel Kushner, Anu Taranath, and Jan Radway.

Again, a lot of poetry and a lot of sound. I want to conclude with a mostly apocryphal story about poetry and sound.

As one would imagine, there were numerous excessive dinner parties during the Romantic Era. At one such party, so the legend goes, a very young, very ephemeral, very awkward, but very deeply passionate John Keats recited, with gusto, a long set of lines from his long, long poem "Endymion." He recited the lines, from memory, to one of his many idols: a much older, much taller, and a much more boring, William Wordsworth.

Not surprisingly, to Keats at least, this impromptu reading was not impressive, and so not successful.

The point here, though, is that Keats felt that he had to recite his poems aloud to Wordsworth. He did so, I think, in order to make it more meaningful. Keats did not hand the great Wordsworth the poem to read at leisure and in silence. No. He wanted Wordsworth to hear his music, right then and there. And so he recited it to him.

Keats' poetry is still being read, aloud, in Simpkins Hall.

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# A World War II Student Shares Her Story

by Kim Ackers

Martha Simons—now 93 years old—graduated from Western when it was still a teachers' college in 1944. Her years in the classroom were influenced by the events of World War II. After graduating, Martha taught English and Latin for thirty years before retiring in 1982.

Martha Simons sent *The Mirror and the Lamp* four remarkable essays about her experiences growing up, attending school, and life after retirement. Below are excerpts from an essay written by Martha entitled "First Year Teacher":

I was a World War II college student, graduating with a Bachelor of Education with majors in English and Latin from Western Illinois State Teachers College at Macomb, Illinois in June of 1944. Because most able-bodied men were engaged in some aspect of the war, teaching jobs were fairly plentiful since almost every small town had its own high school. Superintendents came to campus and conducted interviews to fill teaching positions. The average salary being offered for an annual contract of 9 months employment was \$1700.00. I felt fortunate in signing a contract for \$1800.00! This supposedly meant I received a monthly check for \$200.00. However, since it was war time, our government had enacted a Victory Tax of twenty percent and the State of Illinois withheld five percent for retirement. My net pay per month was \$150.00 for nine months – no pay for June, July and August. I went home to the farm for that interval.

Financially everything was doable. Unlike today's graduate, I had no tuition loans to pay off. I had a scholarship and I had worked. During freshman and sophomore years, I had lived in the home of a professor and had done cooking and cleaning for my room and board. Many professors had such arrangements often for the care of small children. During my junior and senior years I worked in the college library under one of FDR's alphabetical programs which paid 35¢ an hour. Even without such programs, costs were minimal compared to today's standards. As I recall, tuition was \$35.00 a quarter, thirty dollars would be forgiven if we signed



a pledge to teach in the state of Illinois for three years. Even the remaining \$5.00 was difficult to come by. However, it did cover student health services and admission to all college activities. Remember this was the end of the Great Depression years and some men labored for one dollar a day. Wartime prosperity had not yet hit Western Illinois.

**As I recall, tuition was \$35.00 a quarter, thirty dollars would be forgiven if we signed a pledge to teach in the state of Illinois...**

**– Martha Simons,  
Western Alumna**

My first contract was with the district in St. Elmo, Illinois in Fayette County. This town of around 3,000 population was located in the south central part of the state...during the years I was there, a very productive oil and gas field was active and there was a refinery plant in town. The town was filled with all the

malodorous scents associated with the gas and oil business.

My duties consisted of teaching ninth grade English – the class of 90 was divided into two sections of 45 each...I also taught 2 sections of sophomore English, was the school librarian and supervised 2 study halls...There was not a department chairman or a curriculum committee. I was simply issued the literature text, and the grammar/composition text and I pretty much functioned on my own. All teachers were expected to help with school functions, attending student activities, taking a turn at selling tickets at plays and games, living a life above reproach, and serving a good example. Most social life consisted of school and church activities – and for an English teacher, grading of compositions took up a lot of time.

My living arrangements consisted of an upstairs bedroom rental in a private home. Another teacher lived in the other bedroom across the hall and we shared a bath. We did our laundry in the bathroom wash basin and had a rack for drying in a large hall...Our rooming facility was ten or twelve blocks from the high school. None of us had cars; it was still wartime, so we walked the distance in all sorts of weather.

I recall one classroom incident which was unsettling. I was writing on the board with my back to the class when I sensed unrest and giggling then erupting into laughter – I wondered if I had sat in something or if my slip was descending down around my ankles when the scent of skunk began to fill my nostrils. A young man seated in the back of the room had run his trap lines that morning and had had to remove a skunk. Warmth of the classroom had increased the scent and he was too bashful to admit he was at fault. His parents were called to transport him back home.

Martha Simons currently resides in Colorado Springs, living in a large retirement community in the assisted living facility. From all of us at *The Mirror and the Lamp*, we would like to thank Martha for sharing her story with us. We hope she enjoys this next edition as much as the first.

## WHAT IS ENGLISH AND JOURNALISM READING?

As this academic year winds down, *The Mirror and the Lamp* asked the faculty about what books made the biggest impact this year, and what they are looking forward to reading this summer.

Merrill Cole, Barbara C. Harroun, Bill Knox and  
Everett Hamner on page 7.

Shazia Rahman, Marjorie Allison, Bill Thompson and  
Bonnie Sonnek on page 14.

# Chris Ivy: Master of Transitions

by Abigail Tichler, Molly Hall, Rebecca Gonner

Chris Ivy has plenty of experience with transition. He began his higher education journey as a biology major with a pre-health emphasis and an English minor. English isn't so minor in his life anymore, however, as he is now completing his first year in the English graduate program here at Western Illinois University. Ivy has nothing but praise for Western and the English Graduate program. "I do believe WIU was the best possible choice for me; they made the transition to an unfamiliar territory easy, and the faculty here really cannot be beat. I wouldn't trade my experience here for the world," he says.

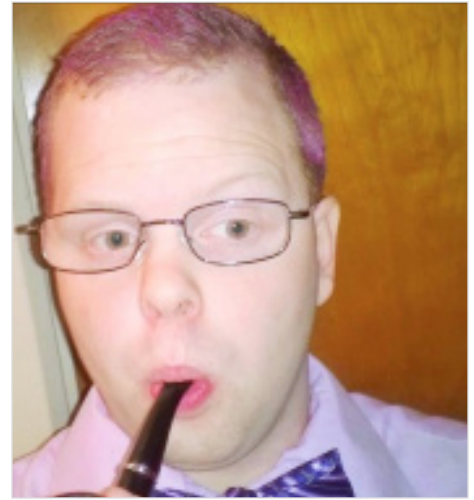
Not only did he transition from majoring in biology to studying graduate level English this past year, but Chris Ivy also is the newly appointed president of the English Graduate Organization (EGO) at WIU. As he finishes up his first year, he is starting to feel comfortable in his new role as leader of the organization. When asked what his title entails, he responded, "It honestly depends from week to week, but normally I am planning out a future agenda for the organization—like planning the graduate conference—in addition to coordinating with other faculty on fun

events we can do."

In addition to a shift in disciplines and added responsibilities, Chris is also getting used to the change in scenery. Having completed his undergraduate degree at Central Methodist University (CMU) in Fayette, Missouri, Ivy says, "I'm really enjoying all of the people and awesome faculty [Western] has to offer. Believe it or not, WIU is much larger than CMU, so it is nice having a bigger campus too." Ivy has high hopes for his future after graduating this program as he aspires to "get my Ph.D. and continue as an instructor in academia."

When asked for some advice to students, Chris said to "always go to your professors to ask questions if you need anything. They have already been through the process and can help in so many different ways." As an English 180 instructor, Ivy knows this better than most. For graduate students in particular, Ivy hopes students will look past the daunting years ahead and enjoy it. "I do believe that the experience is what you make it. Yes, graduate school is busy, but I think WIU is a really good place to attend and learn."

As a parting sentiment, Chris urges all



English students to take advantage of Western's many opportunities, such as the English Graduate Organization. Every fall, EGO hosts a graduate conference where faculty and students are invited to come present research they have been conducting and participate in scholarly conversations. The organization is currently making plans for the next conference, which will have the theme of "English at Play." Ivy encourages anyone who is interested in learning more about the conference or helping plan it to contact him at [ca-ivy@wiu.edu](mailto:ca-ivy@wiu.edu). EGO meetings are every other Wednesday at 4:00 in the Simpkins Hall Writing Center and all are welcome to come join in the discussion.

## 2015 Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society Convention



by April Stokes

It all started with encouragement. Encouragement to go to college, then encouragement and support to put out our best work, get our voices out there, hear other voices, all while attempting to fulfill our dreams in the world and giving back the encouragement we have received; be the best version of ourselves we can be.

These are some of the sentiments I

have as a Western Illinois University English major who had the opportunity to attend the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society Convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico last week to present my creative nonfiction piece along with five other English Majors: Kasandra DeFrieze, Christina Sanders Ring, and Michael Belman from the Quad Cities campus,

and Natasha Morgan and Kimberly Ackers from the Macomb campus.

As we headed across the country from Illinois to New Mexico after tirelessly editing and reediting our works for presentation, we found we are connected to other students, faculty, and professional writers by the same mutual desire to help, encourage, and support each other

. The opportunity to attend the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society Convention came with an enthusiastic “you can do it” from our Sigma Tau Delta Chapter Faculty Advisor, Dr. Timothy Helwig and support from our English faculty mentors. This convention took us outside of the classroom and opened, broadened, and deepened our minds to the diverse thoughts, voices, opinions, feelings, and personalities of other student writers and professional writers from across the nation.

Kimberly Ackers, President of Western Illinois University’s Phi Delta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, shares her experience and what she gained attending the convention:

“I gained a lot from the whole experience. I was exposed to writing and talent from students around the entire country; I had the chance to see what others were putting their heart and soul into, and it was wonderful to see what talent others my age had and were developing. At the Paths to Publication panel, I got great insight into what it takes to get my stories out to the public. I have been rather shy with my writing, but I realize my stories and poetry are not doing anyone any good hiding in my desk at home.

“Another panel I attended was on teaching English in high school. I gained some valuable insight into the inner

workings of schools including how professionals in the education field form their curriculum and help first year teachers adapt to the new environment. I used to worry so much about not fitting in at a school or finding my feet after graduation, but after hearing from five accomplished and seasoned teachers, I feel much more confident.

“The greatest thing that I took from this experience really was inspiration. Being around so many people that are in love with literature and writing as much as I am has really lit a fire inside me. Any doubt that I may have had in the past four years about studying English has been completely washed away. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to attend this convention.”

Kassandra DeFrieze writes about what her experience attending the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society Convention meant to her:

“The Sigma Tau Delta Convention allowed me to step out of my senior-itis and enjoy being an English major one more time before I graduate. It was fun, engaging, and the perfect way for me to re-focus my attention on school. Prior to attending the convention, graduation day was all I could think about. It was nice to see so many enthusiastic English majors, and it made me very proud of my education.”

Dr. Helwig shares his sentiments

after attending the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society Convention:

“As the Midwestern Regent for Sigma Tau Delta and an essay reviewer for the convention, I was impressed with how well our six Western students performed on this international stage in Albuquerque. I watched as our students read and took questions from the audience about their poetry and creative non-fiction pieces, and I moderated a panel with two of our students presenting outstanding literary analyses from their literature classes in the QC. I hope we have at least as many Western students going to the annual convention next March when it will be held even closer to us in the great city of Minneapolis.”

I, too, hope English majors at WIU take the opportunity to submit their critical and creative pieces for consideration to the convention in Minneapolis. Western Illinois University has a supportive English Department of professors and students, and with their support, six WIU English majors attended this year’s convention! We have gained diverse understanding and broadened our experience in the English discipline as we connected with professional writers, faculty, and students across the nation, and we encourage English majors to get out and connect, too.



# Roxane Gay: Bad Feminist

by Alyson Eagan

I’m always toying around with the idea of “feminism” and whether or not I see myself as a feminist. It can be tough and confusing to place the label of “feminist” onto oneself. I saw a sweatshirt that read “This is what a feminist looks like” and I complimented the girl who was wearing it. But it made me think: why did I like the sweatshirt? Am I a feminist? I later heard someone assume this girl in the sweatshirt was a lesbian, because of the word “feminist.” Why do all feminist have to be lesbians, and why is lesbian being thrown around like an insult? (I wish I would have brought this up during the question part!).

Going into Gay’s reading I was hoping to have some of these questions answered. What I did not expect was how funny she would be. Prior to the reading, I had bought her bestselling collection of essays *Bad Feminist* and read about half of them. The way she read them aloud was much more extravagant than the way I had heard them in my head. The whole audience would erupt with laughter every few sentences. We listened as she explained what it was like being a first year professor, how

to be friends with other women, and her opinion/ review on the movie *The Help*.

The audience asked questions on topics such as Ferguson, Bill Cosby, and “what other stuff should we be watching if not *The Help*?” Answers: Ferguson—an injustice, Bill Cosby—a rapist, and “I can’t tell you what to watch, but just be aware.”

Throughout the entire reading I struggled to come up with a good question. I wasn’t just going to ask any question, it would have to be perfect. I waited until the very end, when they were wrapping up, then raised my hand.

“I brought a copy of your book, and I was wondering if you could sign it?”

“Hell no!” she joked. The audience laughed once again. “I’m just messing with you, yeah I’ll sign your book.”

I stood in line, eagerly waiting to meet a famous author whose work I had recently fallen in love with. She signed my book, and I thought of something to say, “I just want to thank you for writing this book. It made me think about things I never would have thought about, but I feel like I should be thinking about...It was a nice perspec-

tive.”

She thanked me.

Roxane Gay is a very sweet, insightful woman, and it comes across in her essays. She gives us her hardcore opinion, and sometimes I disagree (For example, she tears apart my favorite show *Girls* in one of her essays, and yet all I could do was nod and think “I see your point”), but never does that make me want to put down the book, never does that anger me. She offers a refreshing change of perspective. When I finish with a chapter in her book, I put it down, exhale, and think “wow.” It sort of feels like drinking a fresh glass of homemade lemonade, reading her work. Everybody could gain something from taking a look at Roxane Gay’s work. Everyone should check out her work. Once we get stuck in the habit of only seeing our side of things, or our small circle’s side of things, that blinds us to the very important big picture. We are all equal, and we need to keep reaching our heads out around these blinders.

# SCREENING "INSIDE BUFFALO": A Commentary on the Ironic and Contradictory

by Justin Kim

There were about 50 other people sitting in the red chairs of the theater. The majority were spaced out, with only a few groups of whispering students, heads bowed before cell phones; the siren song of extra credit points having lured them into the Sandburg Theater. I, of course, attended because of my interest in the subject matter—although admittedly the extra credit points offered for two of my courses helped sweeten the deal.

Director Fred Kudjo Kuwornu was present at this screening of his documentary, *Inside Buffalo*. When I initially heard of the film screening, I was interested in learning more about the gastrointestinal workings of such magnificent creatures, but I was misinformed in a similar manner to my assumption that "The Secret Life of Bees" was a nature documentary, which led to me staring, mouth agape, in front of a promotional poster decorated with not the strong and studious workers of our ecosystem but instead the smiling faces of utterly boring humans.

What *Inside Buffalo* actually explores are the actions of the African American men that served in the 92nd Infantry Division during World War II, otherwise known as Buffalo Soldiers. Disappointment with the lack of buffaloes aside, I

was drawn to this particular film because most representations of World War II document the heroic actions of "real" American heroes and tiptoe very carefully around the ugly truth of the blatantly racist ideology of the time. While posters were printed of the heroic American man, square jawed and broad shouldered, standing in the face of the hate-filled and discriminatory Nazi regime or the ruthless, alien Japanese, the African American was depicted as corruptive, disgusting, stupid, and animalistic (or at least until the United States started a targeting campaign to recruit African Americans to join the war effort, as discussed in "Inside Buffalo," although this depiction of course promptly resumed when their usefulness expired).

The film itself opens with shots of racial violence and hatred, wasting no time in tackling the subject matter head on. The documentary contained no lingering shots and instead flashed the necessary image on the screen and then abruptly cut to the next. This ceaseless, frantic pace is telling of the scope of the film itself. Director Fred Kudjo Kuwornu, in a Q&A session after the film, told the audience how when starting the production of the film, he realized

that he could not talk about the actions of the 92nd Infantry Division without also addressing the issue of race relations of the time. This necessitated contextualization is a massive undertaking, and so the documentary attempts to do this by taking the arm of the viewer and dragging them along while sprinting at a breakneck pace past years of history and complex social forces. While it is disappointing that a lot of important information was completely neglected, the emotional response elicited by such powerful images was palpable.

The telling of the experiences of the men who served in the 92nd Infantry Division highlighted many ironies of the time. This was achieved through talking head segments, stock footage, and reenactments. The interviewed veterans of the 92nd Infantry Division divulged how they were treated fairly by the Italians they encountered in their tour of duty, but as soon as they returned home after the war, they were still subjected to the discriminatory nature of American society. This brings up the fallacious lunacy of the entire situation: black men that were discriminated against died in droves to protect white people that were being discriminated against to return home to continue to be

discriminated against by those now freed from the oppressive and deadly yoke of discrimination.

Perhaps my appreciation for this film is rooted squarely upon the fact that this film commemorates the sickening hypocrisy, the twisted irony, and the appalling contradiction that permeates the whole of our existence; it grows like mold in every crack and crevice, in every thought and word. We have fought and continue to fight to protect the United States of America—the beacon of liberty and safe refuge for the persecuted. How convenient that our public consciousness sees beneath our feet free soil and not the blood drenched reward of genocide.

However, I found myself in great admiration of the actions of the 92nd Infantry Division. Despite their awareness regarding the injustice of their situation, they still did what they felt they had to do. These veterans fought to protect the democracy and freedom that they were yet unable to attain. Perhaps they are the model for which we should continue to operate in despite our desperate and futile lives—the fight for an ideal in the face of the fact that it may be impossible to attain, paradoxical to desire, or naive to believe.



# IVORY TOWERS AND GRAIN SILOS: EGO CONFERENCE 2014

by Chelsea Brotherton and Abigail Tichler

On October, 24th, 2014, students and scholars from across the nation gathered in Simpkins Hall less than an hour after the sun rose. These academics were coming together to present and take part in the Academic Conference held by Western's English Graduate Organization (EGO) and Sigma Tau Delta (STD).

After 9 am, the group divided themselves into several classrooms to hear panels discuss a wide range of topics from early modern drama to suppression and power in film. After several presentation sessions, the group of presenters and listeners was escorted over to the Multicultural Center to enjoy a delicious pasta bar provided by Sodexo. Around 1 pm, the group was escorted to yet another building, the University Union, to enjoy the keynote Speech by Dr. Julie Rak.

Dr. Rak, a professor of English and Film Studies from the University of Alberta, spoke for more than an hour on the significance of mountaineering and gender identity. Her presentation "What Does Rope Have to Do with Gender?: Mountaineering Writing and the Life of Objects" examined the history of mountaineering with specific detail to gender norms and tied it to the current views of gender and rock climbing. The captivated audience engaged Dr. Rak in a riveting question and answer session during which the topics of gender normativity, mountaineering, and English studies were discussed.

Once the keynote was completed, everyone was escorted back to Simpkins Hall to resume the remaining two panel sessions, where, again, panel topics ranged from creative writing to diver-



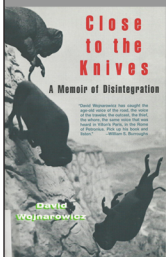
sity and identity in the classroom to place, border crossings, and identity in contemporary Latino/a literature.

At the end of the day, the EGO Conference Graduate Student Award was given to Regan Markley from the University of Central Oklahoma for her paper "Pregnancy and the Great Depression: Meridel Le Sueur's 'Annunciation' and the Sublimation of Motherhood" and to WIU's Cody Cunningham for his paper "The Dehumanization of Body, Nation, and the Motion Picture." Lucas Marshall, also from WIU, won Honorable Mention for "Werther the Drama Queen: The Unreliable Narrator of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*."

After the awards were given, the remaining group of scholars was taken to the STD Writing Workshop, lead by WIU Associate Professor and STD Advisor Dr. Timothy Helwig.

The book that affected me most this year is David Wojnarowicz's *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*. *Close to the Knives* belongs to the genre of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, but spoken from the perspective of a gay man with HIV, it offers an implicit counterdiscourse to Kerouac's heterosexism, racism, misogyny, and lack of political vision. *Close to the Knives* is also stunningly beautiful writing.

This summer, I deliberately chose a few novels I have not read, but have been wanting to read: Sarah Schulman's *Girls, Visions, and Everything*; and Paula Gunn Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*.  
—Merrill Cole

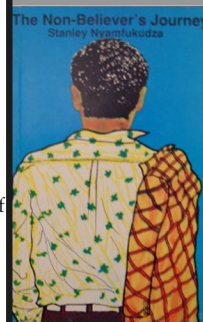


Flannery O'Connor's *A Prayer Journal*. The reading experience was one where I often felt I had no right to be reading these entries, and yet this slim journal allowed me insight to her collected works that I might not have had otherwise, and allowed me to truly re-read, with new eyes, stories that I had read countless times.

This summer I'm reading *Redeployment* by Phil Kay. My reasons are simple—it won the National Book Award, my brothers are both Marines (as is the author), and many of my students have been transformed by war.  
—Barbara C. Harroun



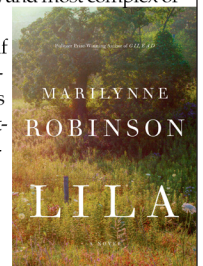
The novella *The Non-Believer's Journey* by Stanley Nyamfukudza, 1980. Set during the Zimbabwe war for independence, the anti-hero Sam, a teacher, faces his ambivalence toward the conflict, ultimately leading to a dead end. The writing itself is simple and direct, unblinking in its treatment of how race, politics, family, tradition, sex, and intentionality can all be sources of victimization.



This summer I am planning to read a collection of stories *Here, There, and Elsewhere: Stories from the Road* by William Least Heat-Moon, 2013. Maybe I'll take it with me on the road!  
—Bill Knox

I was most affected by Marilynne Robinson, *Lila*. This 2014 National Book Award finalist takes place in the same Iowa landscape and character universe as *Gilead* and *Home*. It is exceptionally clean, unsentimental writing about the nature of love, grace, and other topics that when mentioned in a book review typically send me fleeing to Flannery O'Connor.

This summer I plan to read Kim Stanley Robinson, *Aurora*. This Robinson is the boldest, least naive, and most complex of contemporary utopian thinkers, and if one appreciates political nuance and is not easily intimidated by scientific precision, this should be a highlight of 2015.  
—Everett Hamner



# Alumni Spotlight: Daniel Connelly

by Rebecca Gonner

Dan Connelly is a man just like you or me. He enjoys motivational kitten posters, gives firm handshakes, and has a lovable yet rambunctious black lab. This same Dan Connelly was also recently nominated for California League of School's Educator of the Year Award in the fall of 2014.

Connelly graduated from Western Illinois University in 2006. Connelly taught high school English for five years on the south side of Chicago before moving to the San Francisco Bay Area to work at Capuchino High School in 2011. There, he "continues to facilitate and foster individual inquiry and curiosity with humans between the ages of fourteen and sixteen," in Connelly's own words.

Below is his speech:

I want to start by thanking those who nominated me for this award, the California League of Schools for this ceremony, and my students for inspiring me over the last 8 years.

So, why am I here? Why are we here?

No, not necessarily 'why are we nominees for this award,' although I am curious. But why am I a teacher? What is the purpose of school? Something I remember asking each time I was kicked out of Ms. Bartel's and Ms. Rosenstein's classrooms in high school.

Why am I here?

Many of you are probably familiar with Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." Now, many argue that Plato's purpose for writing the story was to argue the role of philosophers in society, but I've yet to meet anyone who's interviewed Plato personally, so I'll assume it's safe to interpret this story in a multitude of ways – something that doesn't always sit well with English teachers.

Plato tells the story of slaves who are chained up in a cave, forced to stare at a wall for their entire lives. Behind them is a fire so that each time a person or animal walks between the slaves and the fire, it casts a shadow on the wall of the cave. For these slaves, this is their entire reality. A reality that has been created for them.

Until one day, a slave is taken out of the cave. He sees an entire world. He realizes that the shadows upon the wall were only fragments of reality. Fragments of truth, created by someone else. He now has a larger scope, larger perspective to inform his own truth. Because of this, he feels the responsibility to return to the cave to inform the other slaves of the world outside. But when he returns, he quickly realizes that the slaves simply cannot understand him. They cannot possibly comprehend what he's seen because to them, the truth is those shadows on the wall.

Today in third period, Marzzio, a junior who has been listed as a "student of concern" because of his risk for "failing out of high school," said quite coldly in response to the allegory, "You know, at school, that's all we're ever shown is shadows. We're only shown shadows."

I could not agree more.

I'll give you an example. It comes from the beginning of this school year. Like many of you, I spent the last quarter of summer (if not more) revamping and revising my syllabus. I sat, with painstaking precision, choosing effective diction, revising syntax and content. I printed off copies. On the first day of school I distributed them. We reviewed them. We discussed them. I asked them to sign them and return them – an acknowledgment that they accept the expectations of the classroom. Phil, from the back of the room, asked "what happens if I don't sign it?" Well, why wouldn't you sign it? I asked. "Because I had no part in making it" he said. And it clicked.

I'm only showing them shadows. I am creating a rubric with my own value systems, philosophy, and imposing it upon these students like a colonizer. They had no opportunity to step out of that cave, evaluate their own reality, truths, values and create something of their own. That syllabus, on day one, serves as a metaphor, the fire set up behind their backs to reflect shadows of my own making on to the wall of the cave. They have no power. They have no



control. They have no voice. They have no agency. They only have shadows.

Now, I don't blame us. I don't blame myself. I can only reflect and revise my truths as they evolve, but it does make sense why we only project shadows. Because the institution is designed this way. As James Baldwin states in his 1963 speech "A Talk to Teachers," "education is set up to meet the aims of society." Education takes place within the societal framework. So, it is actually designed to maintain value systems, maintain rules, maintain power structures, and to maintain a status quo. That is the purpose of education.

Now, I'd agree with Marzzio and Phil as they pointed out, real education facilitates in young people the ability to see the world for themselves. To create meaning for themselves. To ask questions. To find answers. To live with those answers. To live with the beau-

tiful discomfort of not knowing.

But society isn't too anxious to have these kind of people around. And Marzzio and Phil serve as examples of this – their questions and critiques are disruptions, threats to an institution that is designed to simply maintain a status quo. Because what societies ideally want is a citizenry who will simply follow rules and obey orders.

But therein lies the paradox: If we are successful in this, if we are successful in imposing our value systems, our structures, and our truths on young people, that is how we as a society will perish.

So, what I need to ask myself is, how am I facilitating young people to step out of that cave, observe the world, and create their own truths instead of insisting that they accept the shadows that I've projected or the world that I've witnessed outside of that cave?



# 2014-2015 Announcements

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## Award Winning Students

Each spring, the English & Journalism Department awards \$20,000 in scholarships and fellowships for our graduate and undergraduate students. We are pleased to announce the following students were awarded English & Journalism scholarships this spring for the 2015-2016 academic year.

### Undergraduate

**Kimberly Ackers** – Barbara & John Blackburn and Lila Linder scholarships. **Jessica Burke** – Olive Fite American Literature scholarship. **Dakota Carlson** – Lila Linder scholarship. **Chris Ginn** – Wanninger Foundation scholarship. **Rebecca Gonner** – Irving Garwood Shakespeare scholarship. **Marybeth Hornbaker** – Beth Stiffler scholarship in Education, Paul Blackford and John Merrett scholarships in British Literature, and Scholar of the Year. **Sarah Lambach** – Nai-Tung Ting scholarship. **Aleatha Quarles** – Alfred Lindsey Memorial scholarship. **Savannah Whitley** – Bill Bradshaw Memorial scholarship in Journalism. **Anitria Wilson** – Dameris Bagwell Memorial scholarship in Journalism.

### Graduate

**Chelsea Brotherton** – John Mahoney Research Fellowship. **Cody Cunningham** – Syndy M. Conger Essay Award. **Julianne Kaiser** – John Mahoney Research Fellowship and Ron & Leslie Walker Graduate Fellowship. **Lucas Marshall** – Ron & Leslie Walker Graduate Fellowship

## Departmental and College Scholar Awards

The Departmental Scholar awards are sponsored by the Illinois Centennial Honors College. Each semester, departments select the top student in each of their majors graduating that semester. Students are selected based on g.p.a. as well as honors and activities. Those selected receive a medallion to be worn at graduation. Our winners for this year were: Fall 2014, **Rebakah Byrnes** for English and **Ashley Luke** for Journalism. Spring 2015, **Annabelle Borota** for English and **Carlos Williamson** for Journalism. **Ashley Luke** was further honored last fall by her selection as the Cecile A. Christison Sterrett College Scholar in the College of Arts & Sciences.

## Announcements

### Undergraduates

Students launched Veterans Voices: Stories of Combat and Peace. Faculty Advisor, **Barbara Harroun**. Student Editors: **Ryan Bronaugh**, Graduate Student, English (fiction), **Dan Holst**. Graduate Student, English, QC (poetry), **Jared Worley**, Undergraduate Student, English (non-fiction). Our magazine includes 14 contributors who represent all the main branches of the service and have served in Vietnam, Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and more.

Students presented their work at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association on the panel “Creative Fiction: Reading Work, Discussing Craft.” “You don’t have to like a character to love

a character” by **Kimberly Ackers**; “Moving from Fact to Fiction” by **Sarah Lambach**; “Personal Narrative as a Hero’s Journey” by **Ian Lambach**; and “Writing A Novel My Senior Year Because I’d Rather Map Out Somebody Else’s Life” by **Annabelle Borota**

English Education students presented with **Dr. Bonnie Sonnek** at the 22nd Annual Dealing with Differences Institute 2015: Speak Out, Step Up, Stand Together. April 23-25, 2015. The two panels were on language diversity: Panel 1: “Teaching and Assessing Linguistically Diverse Students” included **Dakota Carlson**, **Ashley Grady**, **Ashley Hill** and **Katie Olsen**. Panel 2: “Language Myths” included **Kimberly Ackers**, **Presley DiNardi**, and **MaryBeth Hornbaker**.

Student writers read their creative work in the Boiler Room Reading Series, including **Marybeth Hornbaker**, **Jared R. Worley**, **Ryan Bronaugh** (graduate student), **Sandra Sepaniak**, **Bree Bracey**, **Evan X Edwards**, **Alyson Eagan**, **Brandon Nizzio**, **Luke Taylor**, **Tuesdai Perry**, **Alex Ayers**, and **Jason Herbst**

**Kimberly Ackers** successfully completed her Honors Thesis, a short story collection, interspersed with her award winning poetry.

**Shani Belshaw** interned as a Communications Blogger for the WIU Alumni Association, Macomb, Illinois. She was also a public relations intern for Parliament of the World’s Religions, Chicago, Illinois.

**Annabelle Borota** successfully completed her Honors Thesis, a novel that was three semesters in the making.

**Jacqueline Covey** is a news intern at the McDonough County Voice, Macomb, Illinois.

**Rebecca Gonner** will intern at McGraw Hill Education in Dubuque, Iowa. This year, she was a freelance copyeditor for Steve Tomasula: The Art and Science of New Media Fiction published by Bloomsbury.

**Karissa Kouchis** was a public relations intern for Athlete Network.

**Caitlen O’Day** was development intern at Putnam Museum, Davenport, Iowa.

**Tucker Scharfenberg** interned as an associate editor for Grain Journal, Decatur, Illinois.

**Jessica Sheley (Baumann)** is a public relations director intern at Spring Lake Park, Macomb, Illinois.

**Ashley Stefani**, will intern as a Pilot Project Coordinator in the field office in Peoria of Social Security.

### *Graduate Students*

**Matthew Harrington** accepted a position teaching American culture for the WESL (Western's English as a Second Language) program at Western for the summer of 2015.

### *Alumni*

#### *Undergraduates*

**Tim Miller** (B. A. 2004) is a technical writer at Caterpillar in Peoria, Illinois.

**Chris Brown** (B. A. 2005) is working as the Major Gifts Assistant at Saint Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa.

**Dan Connelly** (B. A. 2006) was nominated for the California League of School's Educator of the Year Award in the fall of 2014. Connelly taught high school English for five years on the south side of Chicago before moving to the San Francisco Bay Area to work at Capuchino High School in 2011. There, he says he "continues to facilitate and foster individual inquiry and curiosity with humans between the ages of fourteen and sixteen."

**Jacob Davis** (B. A. 2008) Social Media Manger at South Port Grocery and Cafe, Chicago, Illinois.

**Kristi Relaz** (B.A. 2008) is working as a Career and College Readiness Coordinator at Howard Area Community Center in Chicago, Illinois.

**Annette Glotfelty** (B. A. 2008) was accepted to the Speech Language Pathology Program at University of Texas.

**Laura Pfeiffer** (B. A. 2008) is working at The Navigators Group in Schamburg, Illinois.

**Neil Lesinski** (B. A. 2009) completed a Masters in Educational Leadership in 2013. He is now the department chair of Career Tech Ed. programs and also teaches English to freshmen and juniors at Lakes Community High School in Lake Villa, Illinois.

**Paige (Brinkman) Timmerman** (B. A. 2012) is a high school Spanish/English teacher at Carlyle High School in Carlyle, Illinois. She is also attending the M.A. program in English literature at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois.

**James Black** (B. A. 2013) is an English Teacher at West Central High School, Biggsville, Illinois.

**Thomas Boyd** (B. A. 2013) Proofreader at Cadence Health, Chicago, Illinois.

**Caitlin Christmas** (B. A. 2013) is currently a long-term substitute English teacher at Staunton High School, Staunton, Illinois.

**Neil Friberg** (B. A. 2013) is a middle school English/Language Arts teacher at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy, East Moline, Illinois.

**Kasey Gallagher** (B. A. 2013): high school British literature and publications teacher at Marian Central Catholic High School.

**Annie Supalla** (2013): 6th grade language arts teacher and J.V. soccer coach at Nathan Hale Middle School in Crestwood, Illinois.

**Elizabeth Geib** (B. A. 2014) was accepted into the Ph.D. program at Purdue.

**Allison Janacek** (B. A. 2013): Middle School Language Arts Teacher at West Central Middle School in Stronghurst, Illinois.

**Ethan Knight** (B. A. 2013) is finishing his M.A. at Texas A&M this spring, and will join University of South Carolina Ph.D. program in the Fall.

**Kelsey McGuire** (B. A. 2013) is a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Mills College in the M.A. in English Literature program.

**Jenni (Mitchell) Waller** (B. A. 2013): High School English Teacher Abingdon – Avon High School Abingdon, Illinois.

**Danielle Reagle** (B. A. 2013) is an alternative education teacher—

English, East Campus Muscatine High School, Muscatine, Iowa.

**Reilly Maloney** (B. A. 2014) is a high school English teacher and assistant cheerleading coach at East Buchanan High School, Gower, Missouri.

**Kylee Palmer** (B. A. 2014) is a high school English teacher at VIT High School in Table Grove, Illinois.

**Suzanne Teague** (B. A. 2014) is an alternative high school English teacher and Ombudsman at the Educational Alternative School, Chicago, Illinois.

**Kasi Defrieze** (B. A. 2015) is Fund Development Manager at Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa, Moline, Illinois.

### *Graduate Students*

**Erin Moore** (M. A. 2006) in a Medical Librarian of Genesis Health System in Davenport, Iowa.

**Zac Dilbeck** (M. A. 2008) completed his Ph.D. in English at Idaho State University, and is currently teaching in a tenure track position at Columbus State Community College.

**Flannery Scott** (M. A. 2008) is a Marketing Communications Specialist at The Brenn-White Group, Colorado Spring, Colorado.

**Annie Schnarr** (M. A. 2009) completed her Ph.D. in English from the University of California Riverside and is now a tenure-track professor at Skagit Valley College in Seattle, Washington.

**Travis Moran** (M. A. 2011) is an English Instructor at English First English Centers in Haidian District, Beijing, China.

**Anna Westermeyer** (B.A. 2009 / M. A. 20013) is now in her fifth year of teaching secondary English Language Arts at Hamilton High School in Hamilton, Illinois.

**Kristyne Bradford** (M. A. 2013 ) Executive Director of the Buchanan Center for the Arts in Monmouth, Illinois.

**Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt** (M. A. 2014) was accepted to attend a weekly seminar sponsored by the Folger Institute at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. She also presented her paper, "'O Save us all, Moor of Moor-Hall': Social and Textual Identity in Dragon-Slaying Ballads" at the 50th International Congress on Medieval Studies, in Kalamazoo, Missouri from May 14-17, 2015.

**Gina Wilkerson** (M. A. 2014) is currently an adjunct at St. Ambrose University teaching Composition I. She is also an adjunct at Black Hawk College teaching Writing Fundamentals II, Composition I and Composition II, Davenport, Iowa.

**Claudia Alonzo** (M. A. 2014) Writing Instructor at Black Hawk Community College and Saint Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa.

**Ruby Kirk Nancy** (M. A. 2015) organized an academic conference, Horizons of Challenge and Change, at Muscatine Community College in April, where she teaches. She has accepted an offer to attend East Carolina University's Ph.D. program in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication beginning in the fall of 2015.

### *Faculty*

**Barbara Ashwood** published her essay "Naked" in Adanna Literary Journal, gave an invited reading for the journal at an event sponsored by Blue State Productions in Clifton, New Jersey, and co-created a new creative nonfiction reading series, Stranger Than Fiction, with Bill Thompson.

**Neil Baird** (with Bradley Dilger) presented "Networks for Research: Building Infrastructures to Support Empirical Research in Writing Studies" at the 2015 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Tampa, Florida.

# 2014-2015 Announcements

**Rebekah Buchanan** published creative work including "There's a Monster in My Closet," [short fiction] *Noctua Literary Magazine*; "What's In a Name," [short fiction] *Straylight Lit Mag*; "Dragons," [poem], *Aberration Labyrinth*. She won for poetry in the Iron Pen Contest for "The Moon Over Money." She was awarded an NEH Summer Institute Stipend: Finding Mississippi in the Civil Rights Narrative, and she presented "The Feminist Punk" at PCA/ACA.

**Merrill Cole** published "Don't Self-Flagellate about White Privilege. Do Something!" *The Huffington Post* (January 20, 2015); "Eighty Euros." [Non-Fiction.] *The Round Up Writers Zine 2:2* (January, 2015): 9-10; "Modernist Poetry." *Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*. Ed. Ellen McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen. New York: Cambridge UP, 2015: 378-401; "Objective Correlative." [Poem.] *The Good Men Project* (October 2014); "Pride and Prejudice and Publication." [Blog.] *Hangman Books* (September 19, 2014); "Proof of Love." *Gay Flash Fiction* (December 2014); "Uncapture This Image." *South Central Review* 32:1 (Spring 2015: Special Issue: Dada, Surrealism, and Colonialism, ed. Martine Antle and Katharine Conley): 23-42; "Waterfall." [Fiction.] *Open Minds Quarterly* 16:4 (Winter 2015): 18-20. He presented his poetry at Festival of Language Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference (AWP), Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 2015; Poetry Reading. A Reading Experiment. AWP, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 2015; "Their Buttons Be Disclosed': Illegibility in Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring*." Marginal Masculinities panel Modernist Studies Association Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, November 2014.

**Roberta Di Carmine**, delivered a paper entitled "Conflicting Values: Personal Lives and Societal Expectations in the Representations of Aging and Mental Disorders in Italian Cinema" at the Third Asian Conference on Film and Documentary, Osaka, Japan November 13-16, 2014. She coordinated and organized "An evening with Italian-Ghanaian filmmaker Fred Kudjo Kuwornu. Screening and discussion of documentary film 'Inside Buffalo.'" Sandburg Theater, Western Illinois University November 5, 2014.

**Barbara Harroun** published work in *Prairie Gold: Anthology of the American Heartland*, *Requited Journal*, *Festival Writer*, *Red Wolf Journal*, *Catch & Release*, *The Lake*, *bioStories Magazine*, *The Riveter Review*, *Hermeneutic Chaos Literary Journal*, *i70 Review*, *Mud Season Review*, *Pea River Journal*, *Sediments Literary-Arts Journal*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *San Gabriel Valley Poetry Quarterly*, *The Rusty Toque*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Black Sun Lit*, *Sugared Water*, *Kudzu House Quarterly*, *freeze frame fiction*, *New Madrid: Journal of Contemporary Literature*, *Circus Book*, *Fiction Southeast*, *The Sonder Review*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Empty Sink, Spelk*, and *The Watershed Review*. She also presented "Rectify: The 'Resurrection' of Southern Gothic as Episodic Television" at PCA/ACA in April.

**Tim Helwig** published an invited reflective article in the 25th anniversary issue of *American Periodicals Journal*. He also presented a paper at the African American Expression in Print and Digital Culture Conference in September, and presented a paper at the American Literature Association Conference in May. He also served as the Chair of the Research Society for American Periodicals' Biennial Book Prize Committee (2013-2014).

**Rich Moreno** contributed an essay to *Nevadans: The Spirit of the Silver State*, a commemorative volume celebrating the Nevada Sesquicentennial published November 2014. He was also a contributor to *Nevada: 150 Years in the Silver State*, the official commemorative volume of the Nevada Sesquicentennial celebration. As a writer/photographer, his work "Lonesome Highway: There's Plenty of Open Road Between Stops Along US 50 in Nevada," appeared in *Westways* magazine, June 2014.

**Shazia Rahman** presented "Border-crossing in Mehreen Jabbar's *Ramchand Pakistani*" at the Canadian Comparative Literature Association at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada in May 2014. Her panel was entitled *Minor Cinemas* and was part of the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Earlier in the same year, she presented "Atonement and Reparations: Pakistan's 1971 War in Sorayya Khan's *Noor*" at a panel entitled *Debt and Indebtedness* at the MLA Convention in Chicago, Illinois in January 2014.

**Bonnie Sonnek** presented at the 22nd Annual Dealing with Differences Institute 2015: *Speak Out, Step Up, Stand Together*. April 23-25, 2015 on two panels on language diversity: "Teaching and Assessing Linguistically Diverse Students." and "Language Myths."

**Bill Thompson** ended his term as the Chair of MLA Libraries and Researchers Forum. He has been elected President of the WIU campus UPI union.

**Alisha White** published "Second reaction: Discussion ideas for Mister and Lady Day: Billie Holiday and the dog who loved her" in *First Opinions, Second Reactions*. Her essay "In search of a cheerful lament: 'Bizarre partners' in an a/r/tographic community of practice" appeared in the Special A/r/tography issue of *Visual Inquiry: Learning & Teaching Art*, 3, 113-123. Her artwork *A Single Raindrop* [mixed media image] *Lightning on Their Faces* [pastel image] *Margot Alone* [pastel image] and *Dis/closure Mask 2.2: Do robots make mistakes? all* appeared in the issues of the journal *Of-With: Journal of Immanent Renditions*. She participated in the "Teaching in a Time of Cancer: Analyzing Embodied Experiences" roundtable at the annual conference of the *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* in Athens, Georgia and "Stories from the past: A Tale of Two Maidens as a frame for teaching Feminist and Disability Studies Theories" roundtable session at the annual conference of the National Council of Teachers of English in Washington, DC.

**Jacqueline Wilson-Jordan** has a creative-non-fiction essay entitled "The Wind" forthcoming, in *The Mulberry Fork Review*. She presented "Rebooting the Psycho: How Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* Assisted in the Recovery of my own Story of Child Abuse" March, 2015, Midwest Conference on Language, Literature, and Media, Northern Illinois University. She was also a facilitator for "Am I All Wrong, or Am I All Right?" April, 2015, Dealing with Difference Institute. She was a facilitator for a session on narrative collage, writing and identity that featured the work of a former student, Jamie Adams; "Veterans' Voices: The Genesis and Development of a Literary Magazine for Student and Alumni Veterans of WIU" panel, with Barbara Harroun and Ryan Bronaugh (English Department Graduate Student) April, 2015. Dealing with Different Institute.

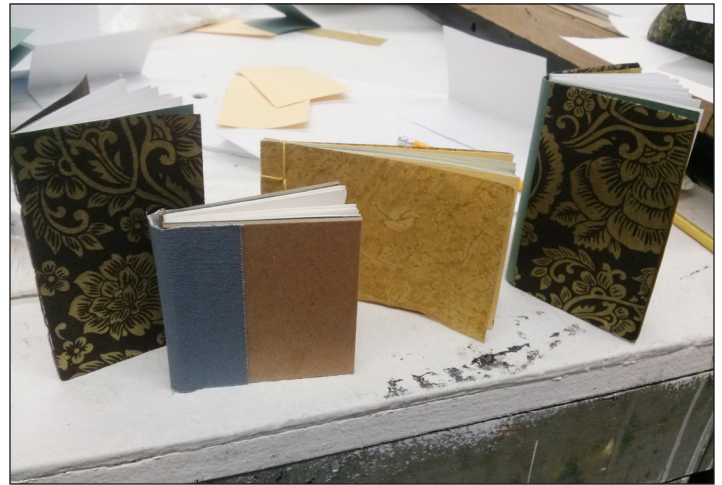
**Erika Wurth** published her novel *Crazy Horse's Girlfriend* with *Curbside Splendor*. Her story "Beautiful, Terrible Thing" appeared in *Sententia*; an excerpt from *Crazy Horse's Girlfriend* appeared in *Hawaii Pacific Review*; "Mason Snap" appeared in *Literary Orphans*; "Wild, Animal Love" appeared in *The Missing Slate* 2014; and "Kes Woodi" was published in *Contrary*.

## Emeritus Faculty

**John Hallwas** is the only Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Western. He is a regional, local, and WIU historian, with books like *Western Illinois Heritage*, *Macomb: A Pictorial History*, and *First Century: A Centennial History of WIU*. Currently, he writes a weekly column for the *McDonough County Voice*, entitled "On Community." You can find his website at: [www.johnhallwas.jimdo.com](http://www.johnhallwas.jimdo.com)

# A NEEDLE PULLING THREAD: THE BASICS OF BOOK BINDING

by Rebecca  
Gonner



Shaggy brown hair, a beard, glasses, and a t-shirt sporting a cat playing the banjo. What could such a man as Professor Joseph Lappie possibly have been doing in Garwood 13 on such an unassuming Friday morning? Using terminology such as guillotine, tail, kettle stitch, and spine there really is only one possible answer. He was leading a book binding workshop, of course!

Prof. Lappie visited Western Illinois University from St. Ambrose University where he teaches a number of courses in printmaking and book arts. His art exhibition, *Always Toward the Space and Moment*, will be on display in the University Art Gallery from January 17-March 17, 2015.

I was among the fortunate ten to fifteen people allowed the honor of taking two hours off work and skipping a class (sorry Professor Kiebel) to attend the five hour long workshop in which we were instructed in how to measure, stitch, and glue together our own homemade books—also known as every English Major super-nerd's dream come true!

Right from the start, Prof. Lappie assured us that though we would be learning simplified versions of the types of books he'd be demonstrating how to make, "it will still be sexy." Unfortunately, the general public does not seem to share Prof. Lappie's enthusiasm for the aesthetics of books, or libraries would probably be a lot more popular. You must admit though, these little guys are pretty handsome. As we passed around our materials for the first book, Prof. Lappie explained the purpose of the different types of paper we were being handed. I was most interested in the endpaper. The endpaper, Prof. Lappie explained, is the decorative paper after the cover of the book, but before the actual story. He described it as the pause or breath that a reader experiences before passing from the real world into the world of the book. That's right, you've read correctly: I created portals to another world! I'll be here all week.

Prof. Lappie taught the gathered faculty and students four different book binding techniques. We started with the Basic 3-Hole Pamphlet Stitch, which covered many of the basic stitching techniques that we would use on later books. After everyone completed the 3-Hole Pamphlet Stitch with minimal difficulties, we moved on to a simplified version of the Japanese Four Hole Stab Bind (which sounds more like a karate move than a book binding technique to me). We then moved from the needle to the glue bottle to make a book using the Drum Leaf Binding technique, which conveniently allowed for a lunch break as our bindings dried beneath the chunks of cement we used to weigh them down. Lastly, we returned to the needle to try our hand at the most complex technique so far, the Link Stitch technique (which I promise you is much more complicated than it sounds). Despite how much I enjoyed the workshop and the visual evidence above of my success in creating my own books, I knew right off the bat that this was not my life calling. One of the first steps—threading the needle—took me so long that eventually I had to interrupt Prof. Lappie's instruction so he could thread it for me. This pattern continued the rest of the workshop. I was always the last one to finish a step and often had to ask those around me how to continue since they were all three steps ahead of me. There's a reason I'm majoring in English.

With sore fingers and a feeling of triumph I emerged from Garwood 13, my four creations safely stowed in my backpack and my new knowledge of book making safely stowed in my mind. I learned how to bind my own books and through all of the stabbing, pasting, and cutting I never had to pull out one of my emergency band-aids. That makes for a day successfully spent in my book. (pun intended)

# Then & Now: Teaching English 180

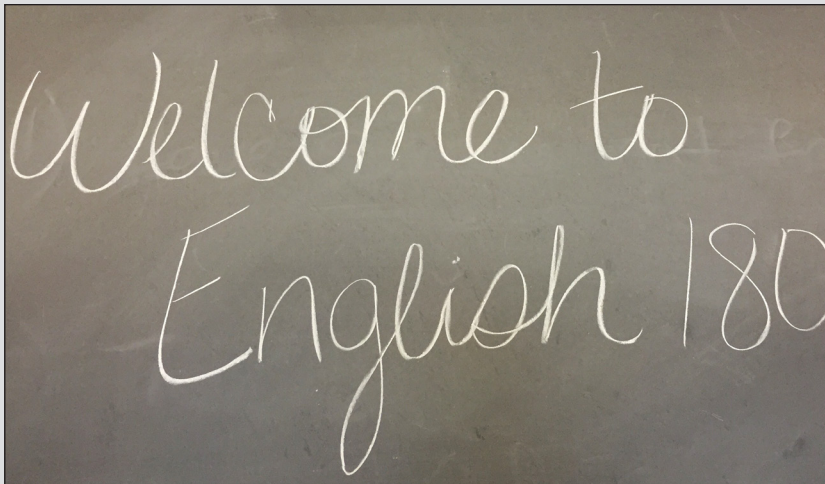
by Chelsea Brotherton

On the first day of the Spring 2015 semester, I was nervous. I sat in my office in Simpkins Hall with fluttering butterflies running amok in my stomach, dreading the moment I would have to go teach my new section of Freshman Composition. Would I have hardworking students this semester? Would they absolutely hate the planned ice breaker? Would they like me? Would I like them?

Question after question ran through my mind until something strange happened. There was some sort of shift in my mind and I suddenly felt calm. I remembered that I am, in fact, qualified to teach and, not only that, but I have experience in teaching this subject. This calm feeling ran through me, and I innately knew that everything was going to be okay. And if it wasn't okay, then that would be okay, too.

Listening to my "Get Psyched" playlist – which contains a lot of the Beatles, Journey, and the Who – I felt far more prepared than I thought I would be. "I've totally got this," I thought, and waltzed into my classroom – that's right, my classroom – and took charge. For the first time since I started this teaching business, I felt like I wasn't pretending to be something I wasn't. I was ready.

There are few things scarier than teaching



your first class. Last semester, as a newly indoctrinated Graduate Teaching Assistant entering her first English 180 classroom, I was a nervous wreck. I spoke too fast, made lame jokes no one understood (doing my best Ben Stein impression: "Bueller? Bueller?"), and let my 75 minute class out after a mere 20 minutes. It was kind of a disaster.

This semester, however, things started differently. That awkward, uneasy person isn't really that uncomfortable in front a classroom anymore. Don't get me wrong – I'm still very much that person, but something has changed now that I'm teaching my second semester of English 180. I'm more confident and I don't let things get me down like I used to.

Maybe it's confidence?

I'm not sure, but I'm inclined to think that

it is. Teaching is a weird thing, for me anyway. It's never stable. There are good days, when students are engaged and responding wonderfully to a well-thought out lesson plan. Then there are bad days, when no one did the reading and I lecture to 22 blank, uninterested faces. It's generally a tossup.

Even so, the differences between the fall and spring semesters are remarkable. I don't stress out nearly as much as I used to about whether or not my students will like

me, if they do the assigned readings, or if they listen to anything I say. I've realized that while I am their teacher, it is not my responsibility to worry about their own work for them. I'm here if they need me, but I'm not going to stress if they don't utilize my office hours or email me with questions. I do my part and it's up to them to do theirs.

This semester has been pretty great so far, and I think a big part of that – in addition to my amazingly bright students – is the poise I've developed in the classroom. Not to say that I'm not this goofy, nerdy person – because, believe me, I still am – but I've learned to accept that part of my persona. I think my students gravitate towards it because I'm not pretending to be someone that I'm not, and I'm very grateful that I learned that after teaching my first semester.

## HOW IT BEGAN: THE FOUNDATIONS OF WESTERN LITERARY SOCIETY

by Dakota Carlson

It was during the Fall semester of 2013 when I was first approached by friend, neighbor, and WIU alumni Benjamin Scott about starting a creative writing organization on campus. The Western Literary Society was started with the goal of bringing together students who enjoy creative writing and reading regardless of their major. Being a founding member and original President of the Western Literary Society, as well as a Renewable Energy: Policy, Planning, and Management major, Benjamin was a prime example of an individual who participated in the organization without coming from an English background. He was very much the driving force and mastermind behind the organization. WLS was established to offer a place where writers can gain confidence, and craft their passions among peers. With much of my passion being in the creative writing process, I was very enthusiastic about being a part of an organization like WLS.

WLS has been one of the most important things I have been a part of during my time at WIU. Being able to connect to other writers who have just as much passion for the art of creative writing as I do has meant the world to me. This organization has helped me to build confidence when it comes to revealing my work to others. It has enabled me to show others the work that I would otherwise keep under wraps. More importantly, WLS has provided me with the motivation to write more. Writing can sometimes be a struggle for everyone. By attending WLS each week, I have built the discipline of writing on a regular basis, which is what it takes to be an accomplished writer. You have to sit down and welcome the creativity. If you don't put the time and creativity into the writing, it is nothing more than ink and page.

This organization has had its ups and downs throughout the past three semesters, especially in terms of its varying attendance. Like with many of the different organizations on campus, it has been tough to get the organization to thrive right from

the start. However, with each week that passes the success of WLS continues to grow. It seems that a lot of students have their reservations about this organization with the preconceived notion that WLS is too formal. This couldn't be further from the truth. WLS is as laid back and open to all realms of work as it gets. We have heard everything from slam poetry to excerpts from novels-in-progress shared during our hour meetings in the Sandburg Lounge. Something that I always try to stress to possible recruits is that there is nothing to be intimidated by. WLS is about pushing one another to be the best writers we can be in a relaxed, comfortable setting.

This past semester was the third semester that WLS has been an active organization on campus and it proved to show the most promise. More and more individuals are reaching out to our organization with interest in expressing their work to others. Striving for the growth of WLS is a tireless process and the will to reach out to more passionate writers will not cease as the group continues to grow stronger.

# Edge Makes its Official Launch

by the Edge Staff

The Edge Launch and IDEAS Coffeehouse Bash proved to be a big success Friday evening, October 24, at Western Illinois University – Quad Cities.

The Edge staff made an official debut of the newest student run publication and first online newspaper to their student body, faculty and administration.

IDEAS upheld the reputation of hosting a creative writing, short story contest in which the student body was encouraged to participate. The winners were announced at the Bash and were given several prizes including Prenzie season tickets, The Book Rack gift cards, WIU paraphernalia and many more.

The first place winner of the Fiction Short Story contest was Allyson Borkgren with "The Working Dead." Coming in second was Chloanne Simmering with her story, "Rebecca's Problem," and the third place winner was Julia McMeekan with "Rusty's Grandmother."

The winner of the Non-Fiction Short Story contest was Christina Sanders-Ring with her story "The Last Woman."

Congratulations to all writers! All of the winning stories and the runners up are published on The Edge under Literary Journal.

A former professor at WIU-QC, John Schulze, attended the Bash and provided a reading of his newly published book, Fertile Ground.

Under the pen-name of Penn Stewart, Dr. Schulze shared his enthusiasm for reading and writing, engaged with the crowd and set up a table for attendees to purchase signed copies of his novel.

The highlight of the night was a surprise to Dr. Everett Hamner and Dr. Dan Malachuk, who were honored by their students for their superb support and mentorship. The students presented each professor with a hand-made gift representing their respective role in the lives of the student body. A cake, with a picture of the two professors, was cut to celebrate the evening.

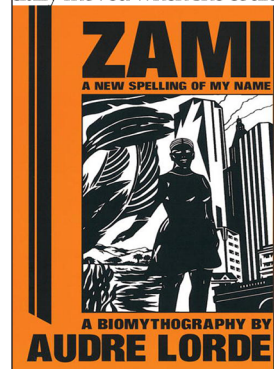
Audrey Adamson, Assistant Director of Student Services, was also honored as a vital individual in the lives of students and more specifically as the support and adviser for WIU-QC IDEAS student group. Adamson was given a small gift of appreciation.

As the coffeehouse playlist played its last tune, the guests murmured their goodbyes and conveyed a job well done for The Edge Launch and annual CoffeeHouse Bash.

Thank you to the Prenzie Players, Comedy Sportz, Terror at Skellington Manor, Milltown Coffee, THEO'S JAVA CLUB, Dead Poet's Espresso Ltd., and The Book Rack, Quad Cities for the donations.

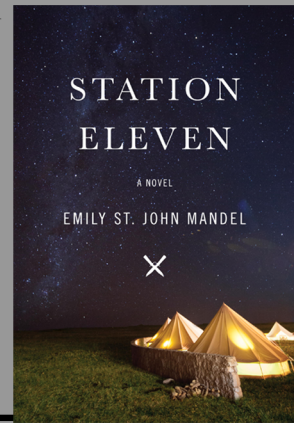


This past year, I read Audre Lorde's memoir *Zami* for the first time. Her beautiful prose is important because she lays out the ways in which her identity is at the intersections of disability, sexuality, race and gender. I was especially moved when she couldn't stand the U.S. any longer and wrote of leaving to live in Mexico and the joy she felt there as a woman of colour who was no longer a minority.



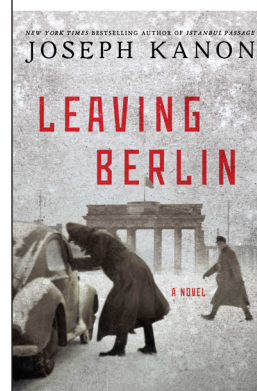
This summer I plan to read Fatima Bhutto's debut novel *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*. I'm looking forward to reading it so that I can learn more about Pakistan's tribal region close to the Afghan border.  
—Shazia Rahman

I'm not sure which books affected me the most, but a favorite was *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel. It is post-apocalyptic but with the twist of a pandemic. It was a bit unsettling to read in the midst of the ebola hysteria, but a great, challenging book, and it involves a roving band of Shakespearean actors. What could be better?



I have no idea what I will be reading. My best picks tend to be discovered at Third Place Books in Seattle—their "staff picks" section always has interesting choices. Often their choices work their way into my classes.  
—Marjorie Allison

Thomas Geoghegan's recently published *Only One Thing Can Save Us* is a beautifully written collection of essays about the direful state that labor finds itself in due to the neo-liberal ascendancy. It is one of those rare books that



communicate complex ideas in an accessible manner without dishonoring the ideas' difficulty.

This summer? I will once again lead the Espionage Book Club. We will start with Joseph Karon's highly reviewed *Leaving Berlin*—which in spyland no one ever quite manages to do. Next up is Ettiene Balibar's *Equaliberty* and Hartmut Rosa's *Alienation and Acceleration*—one of those books that is said to be caffeine for the brain.  
—Bill Thompson

This past year I have been reading *Trespassing* by Uzman Aslam Khan, and a couple of other novels about the contemporary Indian immigrant experience in the U.S. I find myself wanting to know more about the immigrant experience and to open my mind to other cultures. I often think of myself as such a stereotypical American (farmer, midwesterner, German, post-catholic) individual that these books take me to other worlds.



This summer I plan to finish *Don Quixote*, and read the trilogy by Michael Pollan, and several books by Stephen Jay Gould, one of my favorite authors.  
—Bonnie Sonnek



# An Interview with Marjorie Allison

by Kim Ackers

Every English Major's journey is different, and Dr. Marjorie Allison was no exception. I was excited to have the opportunity to interview Dr. Allison for this publication and learn exactly how Dr. Allison found her way to the wonderful discipline that is English. Despite Dr. Allison being a well-known member of the English and Journalism faculty, there was so much I didn't know about her. As a future English teacher myself, I was ready to learn as much as I could.

Dr. Allison is from Monmouth, Illinois, where her father was a Biology professor at Monmouth College. At eighteen, Dr. Allison went off to college with no expectations of returning to the area (little did young Marjorie know she'd end up settled just over 30 miles from her home in years to come). She attended St. Olaf in Northfield, Minnesota, a small private college just south of the twin cities and went on to receive her Masters in Minneapolis.

I went on to ask what led her to study English in college. "For me, it was a choice I had made in high school. I loved reading and writing and my English teachers were some of the most influential people in my life." I wondered if Dr. Allison had had a similar relationship to English during her high school years. Her path to studying English certainly threw me off guard.

"I went to college thinking I was going to do biology or economics because my father was a biologist and my oldest brother is a biologist. He now teaches at Knox. He's weird. So I thought, I'll do biology or I'll do economics because then I can work in banking and I can

travel the world. At the end of my freshman year, I was in my first English class and I thought, I'm good at this. Why am I fighting this?"

I'm sure the look of surprise was obvious on my face. I told Dr. Allison that most of my English friends had chosen English because they loved reading or their high school English teachers were their favorites. She definitely did not have that experience in her high school. In fact, her English teachers nearly turned her away from English.

"They all had the magic decoder rings," She said, "and they all believed this is the way you read this passage and this is what you should do and I hated that. So I just didn't take English seriously." Reading was a huge part of her childhood, but she did not get along with those English teachers. She reassured me that she had great faith in me as a future teacher, but after her experiences and the stories she has heard, she understands how school can kill that passion for English in students.

When I asked what her favorite thing about being an English professor was, she said, "I can't think of a better thing to do with my time than sit around and talk about ideas. So sitting around and talking about literature is talking about ideas."

Dr. Allison received her Ph.D. studying the 19th century British novel, but her emphasis reaches well beyond this limited scope. Dr. Allison has always been interested in women's, ethnic, world, and graphic studies, even while studying British Literature. This semester, she is teaching both Senior Seminar, which contains literature from around the world, as well as Women in Literature.

As we began discussing her professional career, I asked her what she believes her teaching philosophy is. As she thought about it, she said, "I guess my philosophy is, students know more than they think they know and if you let them, if you push them, it will come out. I think I demand a lot because I think you guys can do a lot. But my philosophy in general is I think everyone has something that they can bring to the table."

This philosophy is evident in our Senior Seminar class. Our discussions are lead not only by Dr. Allison, but

each students' personal experience and expertise. Each class that I have had with Dr. Allison has been organized in a similar way and has allowed each student to share their different perspectives.

I first met Dr. Allison my sophomore year in her Non-Western Literature course. Still a timid college student unsure of my major and expectations, I was very grateful to have taken this class with her. Dr. Allison's teaching style and passion for the subject material really helped to bring me out of my shell. Now I am in senior seminar with Dr. Allison and it has been a wonderful experience. It has been a pleasure to get to know her over the years.

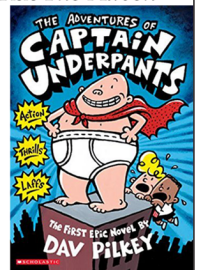
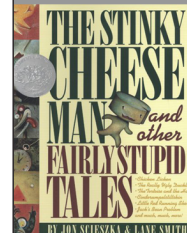
## CHILDHOOD READING

I have recently been reminiscing about the amazing books that my parents spent countless hours reading to me throughout my childhood. I have many fond memories, such as my father making silly, monster voices while reading *The Monster at the End of this Book*.

I decided to ask some of my fellow English Graduate students what their favorite books were from when they were a child.

Julie Kaiser responded by saying *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* by Jon Scieszka was one of her favorite books. When I asked why she felt so fondly toward it, she responded, "STINKY. CHEESE. MAN." I guess no further explanation is necessary.

Matt Harrington said that *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* by Dav Pilkey was his favorite series as child. He says, "Captain Underpants is about a homemade kids comic book that comes to life and deals with problems through the children's perspective."



# Transitions and Decisions

by Alyson Eagan

In high school, I'd planned on attending the University of Iowa, mainly because it was close to home, and I was an Iowa resident. On my trip to the school, however, I was so overwhelmed. Coming from a small town, bustling Iowa City was a shock. I see the appeal of a school like that; many students find solace in a new and different atmosphere, as that's what college is built up to be. But it had me feeling lost. I was truly at a crossroads as I finished my second and final year at Clinton Community College, having only this loose plan of where I was to go next.

My advisor at CCC, Anthony Bielski, was always available for advice- a really friendly, easygoing guy. His wife, Gina Bielski, was also a favorite professor of mine. So I had much respect for them both and valued their opinions.

One particularly pivotal day, CCC was holding a "Majors Fair" and colleges from Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois set up tables throughout the halls. I couldn't help but make stops at a few on my way to class. I noticed the booth for Western Illinois University, but quickly passed it, seeing it was in Illinois and not Iowa.

My advisor spotted me and asked, "Hey, thinking about going to Western?"

"Well, it'd be out-of-state. So, no. I don't think so," I said.

The woman at the booth, and Anthony became animated as they let me know that Iowa residents do, in fact, get in-state-tuition at WIU. Western had been Anthony's alma mater. I decided to meet with him after class and ask for advice.

He told me he had loved it there. The town wasn't too big. It wasn't too far from the Quad Cities. That's where he met his wife, my professor.

After that, I began to notice that all kinds of people who worked at CCC, people whom I respected (including my boss, the Dean of Students), had attended WIU at some point or another. And they all had nothing but positive things to say.

I applied to WIU, and was accepted. I hadn't even visited campus yet, but I was already committed to going. I hadn't bothered to apply anywhere else.

Everything seemed to fall into place after that. I landed two interviews for office jobs around campus (my area of expertise) and ended up getting offered both jobs.

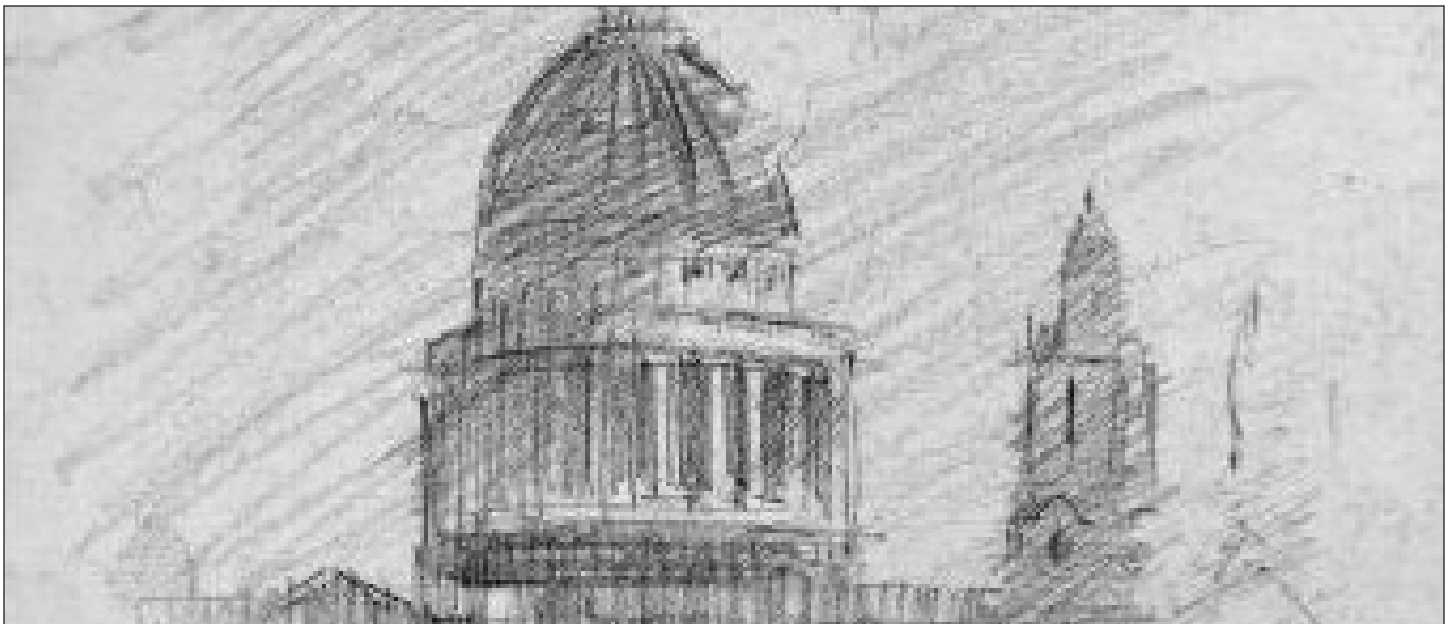
In the spring of 2014, I attended a Discover Western with my mom, stepdad, and grandpa. We were all nervous, hoping that the campus would be "the right fit." I am the oldest of three siblings, and the first person in my family to attend college, so none of us knew what to expect, and that was terrifying.

As soon as we arrived, I just knew. Something felt right about it. I noted that Macomb's population was very close to that of my hometown. I needed something that wasn't going to be a drastic change-of-pace. Macomb encompassed the relief of finally leaving home, with the comfort of feeling like I was still, sort of, home. I didn't feel lost at WIU, as I had felt in Iowa City. Another large factor had been the people. Everyone I interacted with that day, from staff to students, was more than inviting.

I can't imagine what it would feel like to go to a school someplace you don't love, because I fell in love with WIU. My professors have already had a huge impact on me. They are approachable, and willing to go above and beyond for their students. I quickly found activities that I could get into: attending Western Literary Society meetings and the Boiler Room Reading Series, hearing featured readers such as Roxanne Gay, and getting to actually read my own work at the art gallery (that was an experience!). As a psychology major, but also a committed writer/creative writing minor, I am so happy to have all of the events the English Department puts together.

When choosing a college, you just have to go with your gut. When it's right, you'll know it's right. My brother is finishing up his senior year of high school, and he's pretty sure he wants to go to Western. Probably because of the way I have talked it up. My mom worries "what if it's not the right fit for him?" All I said was, have him come visit, and he'll know.

"It was right for me. I knew as soon as we came here that it was the place for me. I love it here, so I don't see why he wouldn't. But he'll know."





# Alumni Spotlight: Kristi Relaz

by Alyson Eagan

WIU Alumni  
Kristi Relaz

is the Coordinator for the Career & College Readiness Program at Howard Area Community Center in Rogers Park, Chicago. Their mission is "to assist high school youth in navigating their path toward a meaningful future through creative pursuit of their unique personal, academic, and employment goals." The duties are ever-changing and no day is the same. They do everything from working one-on-one with students, designing and presenting workshops to groups, collaborating with other organizations and businesses in the community, and planning and going on college visits and leadership retreats, just to name a few.

When asked about her experience working with high school students Relaz answered,

"I love working with high school students because I belly laugh every day. They're so sweet and kind and inherently good and imaginative. And sometimes you can catch them at a pivotal time and say something that you can visibly see resonate, and that's a beautiful feeling to have at work."

And what about surprises?

"There have been lots of surprises. I would say at least one eye raiser a week, but you have to improvise. Sometimes you know what the right thing to do is, and other times you just really hope that it was the best thing to do. One of the biggest surprises for me is hearing my mother's voice in my own during conversations with youth. Many times after a youth leaves the office, I think, 'Wow, I just sounded a lot like my mom,' which is a good thing."

Upon graduating from WIU, Relaz traveled to Costa Rica and earned her TEFL/ TESOL certification to teach English as a Second Language. She taught ESL in both Costa Rica and Chicago. Two years after teaching in Costa Rica, she transitioned to the Program Coordinator for a long-term project of the ALIARSE Foundation-English Volunteers for Change. There, Relaz also wrote and edited vacation home rental descriptions for an online travel agency; Relaz describes the duty as, "very weird and cool."

Returning to Chicago, Relaz volunteered as an advocate with LIFT and worked for the Member Education & Training Center at SEIU. She is now serving as the Program Coordinator for Career and College Readiness with HACC.



Her very first job was at a restaurant and she has since worked at a number of restaurants, still doing so on Saturday nights.

Because many of Relaz's students are from other countries and do not know English as a first language, she has been able to include English language classes and language acquisition experiences to their goal plans in an effective way due to her experience teaching ESL.

Majoring in Spanish, Relaz translated Spanish literature into English, mainly poems, for some of her assignments and classes. She now uses this to better read and interpret Spanish and Latin American Literature. "I can read Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his own language, and also flow through *The Brief and Wonderful Life of Oscar Wao* with ease, without having to look up translations for anything. However, it honestly didn't affect me much as an English student, but, it did impact me as a WIU student because it afforded me the confidence to travel. I studied abroad in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico with my Spanish program which was a life-changing experience."

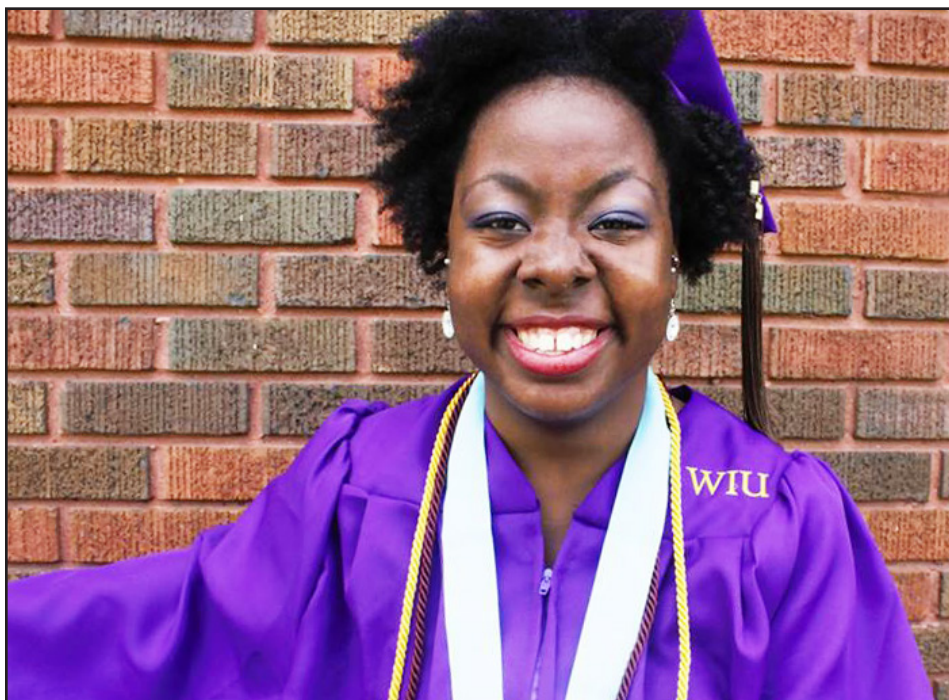
Her second major in Spanish impacted her most after studying abroad/graduation. Although she was able to read and write very well in Spanish after graduating, she still couldn't speak it as well as she wanted. So, with the encouragement of a chef from Guadalajara whom she worked with for years, she decided to travel to Costa Rica to live and work. Relaz says, "I was still working at the same res-

taurant that I started working at when I was 14, and I told him that I was considering going back to Mexico to teach English. He said, 'You've already been to Mexico. If you're going to teach somewhere, go to Costa Rica.'"

On being an English major and how it has impacted her choices, says Relaz, "It has infinitely informed my values and worldview, which has determined my career choices. It has been a hugely positive influence on my personal and professional life. I can visualize and articulate the Domino Effect from the moment I took Intro to Literary studies with Dr. Banash, until now. And I'm very content."

Leaving and returning to the United States, Relaz found that culture shock is a very real thing. She describes it as an emotional roller coaster; from happy to sad, from confident to insecure. "It's like extreme frequencies, but you gradually level-off and realize you're good to go."

Relaz recalls her favorite memory from her time at Western: "One class first semester of sophomore year, we cut and pasted John Barthes 'A Frame Tale'. It was like a lightbulb went off. I realized how three-dimensional literature was and how deeply words influence thoughts and behavior; thus, tangible, three dimensional affects. I thought that literature was like water; endless, timeless, boundless, and impossible to over-analyze or signify one shape. I declared English Literature and Language my primary major that semester."



## ACTRESS, AUTHOR, DIRECTOR: TUESDAI PERRY

by Lucas Taylor

Tuesdai Perry is currently a senior at Western Illinois University. From her purple hair, to her infectious laugh and enthusiastic smile, there is not a single aspect of Tuesdai's personality that does not radiate effervescence. She is an unstoppable force in the theater department here at WIU having personally performed in over ten plays on campus. She has also contributed to countless other university productions in other supporting capacities such as directing, set design, or stage managing. She is currently working on finishing up her Bachelor's Degree with a major in Theatre Directing and a minor in Creative Writing and is set to graduate in Spring 2015. Tuesdai told me that she selected WIU based on the school's musical theater program, the close proximity to her hometown of Gary, Indiana, and, perhaps most importantly, because the alma mater's colors included her favorite color: purple.

At the beginning of her career at WIU, Tuesdai's major was originally Musical Theatre, but she made transition into directing when she swapped majors for Theatre Directing two years ago. She had this to say when prompted about why she felt that the change was necessary, "When I'm looking for something, I'm looking for something specific. I wanted to be able to tell a story and bring out what I like while also helping actors grow, because it's really about them. I want to help actors not only reach their potential, but understand the story and why they're doing it."

Working in the theater with plays and musicals can be incredibly time consuming, but Tuesdai's grace is not shaken. She said about the time consuming process, "We rehearse 6 days a week, 4 hours a night. 24 hours of rehearsing. A complete day. Sometimes we'll rehearse certain scenes and

you won't get called in until a certain time of night." While the extracurricular workload may sound like too much to handle, Tuesdai assured me, "You know you're busy, but it doesn't feel like work."

Despite the consumption of her free-time outside of the classroom, Tuesdai is relentless when it comes to her passion. However, she was not always so keen to get up on stage to perform. The story of how she started her long career in theater was quite different than I expected. Tuesdai said about her beginnings as a young actress, "Getting into theatre is actually really funny. My 6th grade year you get trophies at awards day. I knew if you did the Saturday School Little People's Theater program you get a trophy. I was like fine, it's another trophy...but then I ended up with nine. That's how I first got into theater [for the trophies], but then I realized I liked it."

Tuesdai's minor in Creative Writing, with an emphasis on fiction, has also contributed heavily to her work in the theater. She is constantly writing and refining her craft through her work with short stories and poetry. Tuesdai said about her time studying creative writing, "It did compliment my major [Theatre Directing]. I learned as early as my first creative writing classes with John Schultz, when you're telling a story only leave in the vital parts." Tuesdai maintained that whenever she writes a line of poetry or prose, she is constantly asking herself how it adds to the purpose of the story that is trying to be told. That process supplements her work as a director in the theater quite well. "That really helps me with my directing when I'm working with blocking or choreographing it's like how can I tell this story, how do the dominos line up, is this needed or is it not." In other words, it's all about including what is absolutely necessary to the story she is working on in order to have the best possible narrative or

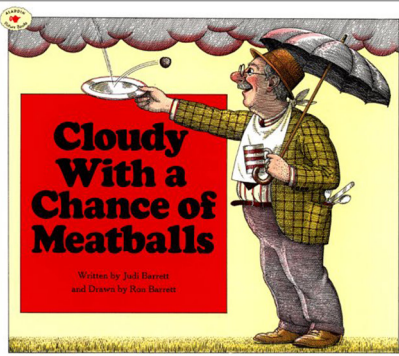
poem during her writing process.

The culmination of her work in theater and creative writing will be on full display when Tuesdai presents "*The Colored Museum*," a show that she is directing for her Honor's thesis before graduation in May. It goes up the last weekend of April in Simpkins Theater, located in Simpkins hall. Tuesdai said about her final directing effort at Western Illinois University, "It's presented kind of like a museum, but it's different. There are eleven exhibits that look at the African-American experience in America from slavery up until now. But it doesn't only focus on African-Americans, basically it sends the message like 'how do you go on when you have so much baggage?' and that is what makes the message universal."

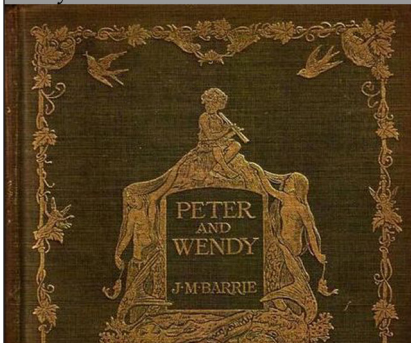
Tuesdai's plans post-graduation are ambitious as ever. When I asked her what the future holds for her with her theater and creative writing background, she joked, "It's hard to say. I don't even know what I'm going to do next weekend." She told me that she has ambitions of getting some real-world experience while she continues to perfect her craft as an actress, director, and writer. This summer, she plans to commute from her hometown in Gary, Indiana, to Northbrook, Illinois. "I'll be a performing arts instructor for children grades K-2 for their Kids On Broadway program." After that, she told me, the future is wide open.

More than anything, Tuesdai Perry plans on being happy no matter where life ends up taking her. She said that the most important thing is ensuring confidence and stability in the work that she loves. "I just want to find security within what I want to do. It's not that I'm striving for happiness, but it's weird because what I do brings me so much happiness."

Lucas Marshall said that *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett was one of his childhood favorites. “It tells the story of Chewandswallow, a town whose inhabitants are well fed due to it raining food. The book starts out on a happy note, but then the weather gets severe and the town takes a turn for the worst—the town school, for instance, has to shut down because a giant pancake falls on it! I also thought it would be cool to make a house out of two giant pieces of French toast, or to use one of them to escape down the river, Huck Finn style.”



Cody Cunningham told me his favorite children’s book was *Peter Pan and Wendy* by J. M. Barrie. “All children—except one—grow up.’ J.M. Barrie’s classic story of the boy orphan and the nefarious Captain Hook has captured the imaginations of children young and grown for well over a century. Their grand tale occupied my dreams when I was Peter’s age and has continued to remind me to see every day through a child’s innocent eyes. ‘To live will be an awfully big adventure,’ Barrie suggests—whether sailing the seven seas or carried out in our own backyard.”



# Adventures in Creative Nonfiction: The Stranger than Fiction Reading Series

by Dylan Blalock

So... an English major, Marketing major and a couple Creative Writing minors walked into a bar one afternoon— well, actually it was a library, but the words spoken could have been inspired by Dionysus himself. The inaugural Stranger Than Fiction: A Flash Nonfiction Reading held on Friday, May 1st in the Malpass Library brought students, faculty, and the community together for an afternoon of true and astounding short stories. Seven authors shared their tales (each no more than 750 words) that covered everything from love and family to moments as simple as an awkward encounter and moments as complicated as losing ones virginity.

Each author approached the podium with a serene confidence. The audience sat quietly with eager ears, waiting to see if the “staggering astonishment” promised to them would come to fruition. The authors, however, did more than astonish the audience: they were captivating and refused to let go until the very last sentence.

For example, Luke Taylor’s piece entitled “Alarm Clock” focused on the humor (and sometimes horror) of trying to sleep when it seems like the rest of the world, including

the family cat, wants to keep you awake. The audience empathized with the passionate author as they knew the feeling all too well. My flash nonfiction piece, which I titled the “The Manhood,” engaged listeners as I shifted from beautiful, to disturbing, to downright hilarious imagery while recounting my not-so-thrilling “first time”.

Every piece read was written with remarkable quality that was even more impressive considering the authors were all students who are still perfecting their craft. Writers Shelby Grazulis, Gina Divittorio, Alyson Eagan, Brandon Nizzio, Sandra Sepaniak, Luke Taylor, and myself closed the reading with a Q&A session where we answered the audience’s questions with the same honesty in which we wrote our creative nonfiction pieces. It sparked conversation about the idea of truth and the unique challenges of writing about real life that could be enjoyed by people from a variety of backgrounds and interests.

I encourage all to attend the next Stranger Than Fiction Reading to hear the amazing and real stories of students on campus in order to see that there is truly no greater plot twist than the natural turns of reality.





WESTERN  
ILLINOIS  
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# The Mirror & The Lamp

Department of English and Journalism  
Macomb, Illinois 61455

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We hope you enjoy the second edition of *The Mirror & The Lamp*. We trust that this newsletter will bring together students, faculty, and alumni of the Western Illinois University English and Journalism Department for years to come. You can help by keeping us informed of your recent activities and achievements.

Please email David Banash, Faculty Advisor, with any updates or announcements that you would like to share at [D-Banash@wiu.edu](mailto:D-Banash@wiu.edu). You may also send us a letter at:

*The Mirror & The Lamp*  
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With your assistance, *The Mirror & The Lamp* will be a valuable and long-standing English and Journalism Department publication. Thank you!

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