

Literature & Criticism

From the Director:



This has been a momentous year for our program, our university, and our nation. In January, we moved into our new home in the Humanities and Social Sciences building, and we have all been enjoying our beautiful new abode. Then, on October 29, we all participated in the first-ever faculty strike at IUP. Not one of us wanted to go on strike, but we all stood on those picket lines not just to fight for better salaries and benefits. We stood up because we cared about both quality and equality in public higher education for all citizens in this state. Fortunately, it only lasted three days, and although not everyone is happy with the new Collective Bargaining Agreement, we did refuse to accept, among many other things, any effort to divide the faculty so that the most vulnerable of our colleagues, temporary faculty, might then get only 50% of the raises granted to tenure-track faculty. This is good news for our program and for the university.

And I have one more piece of very good news: Michael T. Williamson has taken over as our new M.A. Coordinator as Todd Thompson has now assumed his new duties as Assistant Chair of the English Department. We all thank Todd for the

great job he did in improving and expanding our two M.A. programs—students have been telling me how much they appreciate his generous and thoughtful advising. We are all grateful that Mike has agreed to carry on in this spirit, and he brings great expertise and enthusiasm to his new position. It is my pleasure to be working with him now.

Our nation has, however, struggled over this year's bitterly contested Presidential election. Regardless of one's political affiliations, our new President-elect has expressed views about ethnic and racial minorities, immigrants, Muslims, and women that will surely trouble any educational institution. When our own Literature and Criticism doctoral program consists of more than one-third international students, we all have grave concerns. The incoming administration has threatened to establish new policies that target many vulnerable populations who are consequently experiencing understandable stress, anxiety, and fear. We are called upon as faculty, administrators, and students to voice our strong opposition to any such discriminatory policies. I speak on behalf of all faculty in our program when I say that we unequivocally support any students affected by these policies. A hallmark of our program has been the range of cultural diversity and social differences that give it such vitality. Our caring for truth, evidence, open inquiry, and informed judgment are at the heart of any democracy and certainly at the heart of what education is all about. Even in our culture of speed, stress, and crisis, we need to commit ourselves to a culture of compassion where hope, humility, and resilience can thrive.

On a happier note, please be sure to check out all the amazing activities carried out by members of our program.

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A Conversation with Dr. Gian Pagnucci

By: Abigail Hennon



Abigail Hennon: *Just to begin our conversation, can you speak generally about what led you to this interest in graphic novels and comic books? And, how did it lead to your collaboration with Alex Romagnoli on this volume of Works & Days?*

Dr. Gian Pagnucci: I have had a lifelong interest in comics, since I was a kid. But over time, comics got more and more expensive and financially that was an issue, so I quit collecting for quite a while. When I started teaching at IUP I started collecting again, but that was it. I wasn't doing any kind of scholarly work on it. Alex Romagnoli, who was in IUP's Composition and TESOL doctoral program, came to me at one point, because he knew I was interested in comics, with a piece about Superman. When a comic reaches a milestone, like seven hundred issues have been published, they publish a big issue with lots of stories. There was a very short story in one of these issues in which Superman chooses to give up his US citizenship, because he's mad about a governmental policy, like weapons, arms dealing, or something. Superman gets fed up with the United States, and says, "I'm going to become a citizen of the world now." And, interestingly, that got picked up by the national news and people complained about it. When I was a kid, comics were really on the periphery, but now, this stuff is national news. There was a lot of public outrage about the *Superman* storyline. Alex had done a paper about that, which I found interesting. Talking with Alex prompted me to write about Captain America, a character I love. Captain America had been killed in a comic book issue around that time and it was a national story as well because he always represents American values. After a nuclear powered villain caused a massive explosion and wiped out a neighborhood, the government says, we've got to do something about these superheroes. We want to know what their identities are and they'll need to register with us, so we can try to control and monitor their actions. Captain America doesn't trust that government plan and refuses to register. He rebels and goes underground. Suddenly, you have the icon of America fighting against the American government.

Eventually, Captain America turns himself in and as he's being escorted to court, a sniper kills him. It was national news.

Because our topics were similar, Alex and I decided to do a presentation together at the MidAtlantic Popular & American Culture Conference. At the conference, the publisher Scarecrow Press, which is now Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, approached us and expressed an interest in having us write a book on comics. We decided to focus our book, *Enter the Superheroes*, on superhero stories rather than more limited set of graphic novels that academics normally teach. What is interesting theoretically is that in the academy, there's been some interest in graphic novels, like *Persepolis*, *Maus*, and a few others, but most of the canonized works are realistic fiction. For example, *Maus* is about the holocaust. In the story, the Jews are mice and the Nazis are cats, but at the same time it is a realistic story and, in fact, the writer, Art Spiegelman, never directly addresses the fact that the Jews in the story are mice. Readers treat the cats and mice as if they're real people. In a sense, a lot of the revered graphic novels are dealing with real world issues and have realism.



AH: *In your introduction to the Works & Days issue, you distinguish between literary adaptations, or just graphic novels, and superheroes. What are the differences?*

GP: There are a lot of really fascinating books on this, like Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. I think what Alex and I were finding was that the

academy was willing to incorporate some comics and graphic novels had even started to become kind of sexy to teach. But the only superhero comic book that anyone ever talks about is *Watchmen*, a book that suggests if we had superheroes in real life, they would ruin the world. The government in the *Watchmen* story gets control of the heroes and uses them for their own ends, so, even *Watchmen*, which is a superhero book, is very much an anti-superhero book. There is still a bias against superheroes in the academy, even though superheroes have persisted for so long now. *Superman* began in 1939, so we're talking over seventy years, and that's really interesting from a story-telling perspective. They keep

recycling story lines, but as Superman can't really ever die, there is no end to the story. How do you keep making it fresh? Alex and I were talking about these things for the *Works & Days* issue. We found that what Comic Studies scholars were saying is that they need help legitimating the work. People will say it's okay to use a graphic novel in a class, but is it okay to do scholarship on that? Am I going to get promoted? Can I get tenure with that? The real value of the issue is the opportunity to get Comic Studies work published to legitimize it—that was some of the impetus. I went to David and said, what about a *Works & Days* issue to focus on comics?

AH: *What were some of the challenges of choosing works for this issue?*

GP: Because composition is in my background, I am especially interested in the composing and writing process, but the issue of *Works & Days* seemed to be another way to show all of the interesting things going on. We sent out a broad call to see what we would get—pedagogy, education, or culture. We didn't have as many pedagogical pieces as maybe we were interested in, but we did get some very good ones. Sandy Eckard has a piece on Lois Lane, "Analyzing the Avatar of Lois Lane: What We Learn from the Daily Planet Reporter." She's interested in how Lois Lane keeps getting reinvented and especially the way that Lois Lane, in the beginning, can never figure out that Clark Kent is Superman, when we can all clearly see it. Sandy argues that this is how women are perceived at that time and that as Lois Lane gets more liberated, as she becomes more powerful, she figures out who Superman really is and becomes an important part of the story. Sandy loved that Lois becomes more and more empowered, and less and less a damsel in distress.

AH: *Toby Miller suggests combining Humanities One, the traditional canon, with Humanities Two, which "is tied more directly to job markets and is built on teaching communications skills and media studies" (13). Can Comic Studies help bolster interest in English degrees?*

GP: I think that that's what we were thinking. Nationally there is this trend of English majors declining. It's been like that for quite a while. I think what Miller's piece gets

us thinking about is what we can do to revitalize the humanities. In a way, humanities degrees are maybe more relevant now than they have ever been. The problems we face today are much more complex than years ago. I am thinking that this is a time when we really need complex thinking. One of the things that this issue of *Works & Days* tries to say is that comic books and graphic novels are fascinating texts, totally legitimate to study in and of themselves, and they address significant social and cultural issues. They're extremely complex.

AH: *There's a big part of reading in between the lines, in the gutter, in graphic novels. You have to read more than just the text.*

GP: Absolutely. Eric Stainbrook, one of the composition alums here, looked at that very thing in his dissertation, reading comics and how much cognitively has to happen in order for the reader to process the comic. So much of it is what is in the gutter, what you are not seeing, the way things are not represented, and blank space. A very complex reading process has to happen. The content is also really interesting in many ways.

AH: *How do you see superheroes tying into an English degree? Do they fit in American Literature or British Literature? Do they replace something?*

GP: I think change is very slow in English. I hear discussions where people ask, can we possibly have an English major graduate who hasn't been exposed to 17th century this or that. Of course on one level all of that material is vitally important. Literature from the 17th century is great. But that's the problem, too. Degree programs are typically built around a coverage model that says we need different eras and we need to have all these pre- and post-century courses. But at IUP, especially in the Literature & Criticism doctoral program, I see

a shift in the focus. I just attended a proposal meeting for Eliza Albert Baird, who is looking at video games and graphic novels, like *Persepolis* and *Palestine*. Fascinating work, so I think there's a new crop of scholars who are doing more cutting edge stuff now and who are starting to feel as if they do not need to apologize for using nontraditional texts in their scholarly work.



There's a piece in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by *Archie* comic scholar Bart Beaty, "Taking Comics Seriously." It came out in April 2015, right as we were finishing the *Works & Days* issue. Beaty said the same thing. He developed his career, got tenure, and *then* he started doing his Comics Studies. It was the same for me. I did not publish Comics Studies work until I felt like I was secure enough to do so.

AH: *We've grown up with comics, but now we have to look at them again, so that we can see there's more to the stories than just entertainment.*

GP: Exactly, like Tanya Heflin's piece, "Minds in the Gutter: Psychological Self-Exposure in Graphic Memoir," on Alison Bechdel. You start seeing interesting autobiographical constructions, rethinking of identity, and all kinds of interesting story telling techniques or narrative techniques.

One of the great things about comics, and especially superhero comics, is that they are positive. Superman could rob a bank, take whatever he wants, but from the beginning we imagined superheroes fighting crime. We have a character like Spider-Man, whose whole origin is about if you don't use your powers for good, bad things happen. His uncle is killed because Spider-Man doesn't stop the criminal and could easily have done it. That's the heart of the story and that then fuses throughout all of superhero literature. That is always its question: do you have a responsibility to do good?

2016 Banned Books Week: Celebrating Diverse Voices!

By: Sarah Poeppel

Every year during the last week of September, the American Library Association (ALA) focuses on Banned Books by encouraging people to celebrate their freedom to read and by drawing awareness to the issue of censorship in libraries and schools. Across the nation, libraries, universities, and grade schools gather to celebrate Banned Books Week by hosting various Read-Outs and other events centered around celebrating the most frequently banned books of that year. For 2016's Banned Books Week, ALA chose to specifically highlight voices of diversity that have been regularly banned or challenged for decades across the nation.



2016 Banned Books library display

At IUP, Banned Books Week has become a beloved tradition since its 2012 origination in Dr. Tanya Heflin's undergraduate English 340 Novel class. This year, the annual Read-Out event and the Six O'Clock Series were sponsored by the English Department with support from IUP Libraries and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and facilitated by the English Graduate Organization (EGO) in conjunction with Dr. Heflin. This year's Six O'Clock Series featured the English Department's new Pop Culture Methodologies (PCM) organization as members Meghan Hurley, Nick Katsiadas, Mark di Mauro, and Michaela O'Toole facilitated a panel on "Diverse Voices in Pop Culture."

This year's Banned Books Read-Out was held in the glass-enclosed atrium of the new Humanities and Social Sciences building. MCs Meghan Hurley and Wesley McMasters entertained passersby as they were waiting for their courses to begin, and students, faculty, and staff gathered to read passages from various books centered on celebrating the diversity of our voices as human beings. This year's Banned Books Read-Out drew attention to issues of censorship in schools and libraries across the nation, while simultaneously it drew our attention to particular issues relating to attempts to silence diverse voices especially. Listeners heard passages that depicted the eloquence and beauty many of these writers are able to create through their writing and use to draw their readers in. Beyond the beauty, though, these banned and challenged authors are able to celebrate humanity for what it is: diverse. Listeners were able to learn about some of the challenges to diversity as they formulated new reading lists and got glimpses into some of these books through the passages read at this event.

Many attendees were surprised to see some of their favorite books on the list, including many children's books.

Featured authors included: Chinua Achebe, Sherman Alexie, Maya Angelou, Alison Bechdel, Dee Brown, Gennifer Choldenko, Suzanne Collins, Ralph Ellison, Louise Erdrich, Gayle Forman, John Green, Khaled Hosseini, Sam Kean, David Levithan, Malcom X, Toni Morrison, Tim O'Brien, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Highlights from this year's event included lively readings from faculty and staff members as well as from graduate students. Special guests included: President Mike Driscoll, Provost Timothy Moerland, Dr. John Kilmarx, Dean Yaw Asamoah, Dr. Gian Pagnucci, Dr. Todd Thompson, Dr. Theresa McDevitt, Dr. Joe Mannard, and Dr. Emily Wender.

Mark your calendars now, and please join us next year in the last week of September to celebrate Banned Books Week.



Faculty News!

Dr. Susan Comfort recently gave a presentation with Dr. Amanda Poole (Anthropology) titled "Sustainability Education in Northern Appalachia: Connecting Gender, Race, and Class in Interdisciplinary Sustainability Studies" at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education Conference in Baltimore on October 10, 2016. Drs. Comfort and Poole are co-directors of the Sustainability Studies Minor program at IUP. Their presentation involved a

discussion of competing definitions of sustainability, and strategies for developing curriculum and programming rooted in key concepts from environmental justice and ecofeminist theory. IUP's new minor program in Sustainability Studies joins a growing trend in higher education, and can provide an important model for other institutions that are building curriculum in this field. Dr. Comfort is also scheduled to present a paper at the annual meeting of the South Asian Literature Association in Philadelphia, January 2-4, 2017, on "Gender, and the Peripheral Aesthetics of Global Climate Change in Uzma Aslam Khan's Fiction." And, finally, Dr. Comfort has been invited to serve for a second year on the Fulbright U.S. Student Screening Committee, which will convene in New York on November 16. She will review applications from U.S. graduate students seeking to study in India under the Fulbright-India Program for the 2016-2017 academic year. Comfort, herself, was a 2010-2011 recipient of a Fulbright Grant to conduct research in India.

Dr. David Downing was selected as the 2016-17 Distinguished University Professor. In this role, he served as the M.C. for the First Year Convocation in August, 2016, and he was the Commencement Speaker at the December, 2016 Commencement Ceremony in Fisher Auditorium. The title of his address was "Higher Education and the Crisis of Care." With former IUP L&C graduate, **Abdullah M. Dagamseh**, David co-authored an essay, "Neoliberal Economy: Violence of Economic Deregulation in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*," that was published this past year in the international journal, *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*. David also arranged for Dr. Leonard Cassuto to speak at IUP in November, 2015; Dr. Cassuto is the author of the important new book, *The Graduate School Mess: What Caused It and How We Can Fix It* (Harvard UP, 2015); this presentation was jointly funded by the School of Graduate Studies and Research, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the English Department, the Composition and TESOL Program, and the Literature and Criticism Program. This year's volume of *Works and Days* was *Scholactivism: Reflections on Transforming Praxis In and Beyond the Classroom*. It was guest edited by Joseph G. Ramsey, who wrote the introduction. **Peter Faziani** and **Matthew Stumpf** served as Editorial Assistants. Former L&C graduate **Edward J. Carvalho** contributed an interview with Ward Churchill, "The Activist Scholar: 'to confront and dismantle.'" The volume includes contributions from an international set of 39 scholar/activists.

Dr. Tanya Heflin, throughout 2016, has continued her research into women's life-writing narrative and her teaching of multiethnic U.S. fiction and prose. Her article, "Some Job!: The Private Diary of World War II Combat Nurse Beulah Johns," was accepted for publication in *Women's History* for a special issue on original ways of using documents to recover women's history (forthcoming in 2017). This article examines changing work roles for women during World War II and draws on a 1942 military diary discovered in the IUP Special Collections archive, which Dr. Heflin and a team of faculty and graduate students from IUP's Special Collections and IUP's Center for Digital Humanities has been working to digitize as part of a PASSHE grant to develop the proof-of-concept project for an online repository of hard-to-access manuscript diaries (scheduled for a public launch in early 2017). In November 2016, Dr. Heflin presented her work, "Tracing the Walking Woman as Embodiment of Female Geniüs in the American West: Mary Hunter Austin's Manuscript Diary and Published Fiction," which examined an elusive turn-of-the-century usage of "Geniüs" as a means of expansion and escape for U.S. women in the American West, focusing specifically on Hunter's 1889 manuscript diary and her 1912 publication of the novel *A Woman of Genius*. This work illustrates one example of the kind of archival recovery work she encouraged students to produce in her fall course on "Hidden Voices: Suppressed, Contested, and Recovered Texts in American Literature" (ENGL 983). In Spring 2016, Dr. Heflin taught "Mystery, Magic, and the Uncanny in Women's Literature" (ENGL 772/872), which examined texts spanning magical realism, fairy tale, and slipstream fiction to get to the evocative underpinnings of affect in women's literature. And she looks forward in Spring 2017 to teaching a new course, "Activism in the Americas, 1848-2018," which will examine key watershed moments in the literature and life-writing that has been imbricated with social activism from Seneca Falls to Black Lives Matter and contemporary activist movements.

Dr. Melanie Holm began the year presenting a paper on digital pedagogy, "Fantomina on Tinder: Taking the Marriage Plot Online" at the annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies; she has revised this talk into the article "Taking the Marriage plot online: Eighteenth-Century Gender Play and the Digital Native" which is forthcoming in *Aphra Behn Online*. Over the summer, she and her co-editor, Dr. Christopher GoGwilt, finished editing articles for their collection, *Mockingbird Technologies: Essays on the*

Comparative and Global Poetics of Bird Mimicry, which is forthcoming from Fordham University Press in 2017. Dr. Holm also contributed a chapter to this volume and co-wrote the theoretical introduction explaining the methodology and orientation of this transhistorical, comparative study of the problems of and problems raised by mimesis. Also during the summer, she wrote three book reviews solicited from her 2015 article on Laurence Sterne, two for *The Scriblerian* and one for *The Shandean*. In the fall, she presented work on Jonathan Swift from the second chapter of her book manuscript, "The Skeptical Imagination," at the annual meeting of the East-Central Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. She is currently completing a course on digital edition building and working on an edition of *Tristram Shandy's Bon Mots.* and beginning work on a digital humanities project, "Project Saucebox," that traces the circulation, proliferation, adaptation of gender slurs in early eighteenth-century print culture, work which she is pursuing in affiliation with IUP's Center for Digital Humanities and Culture (DHC). She and **Ken Sherwood** began a Digital Humanities reading group at the university through the DHC, which will have its first session in Winter 2016. In the Spring, Dr. Holm is looking forward to presenting on both pedagogical research and literary research at the Annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, and continuing her Digital Humanities research and education, and writing two more reviews on skeptical philosophy for *The Scriblerian*.

Dr. Christopher Kuipers presented "Charting the Rivers of the Mind: The Contemporary State of Concept-Formation in the Humanities" at the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment Off-Year Symposium at Western New Mexico University in Silver City, New Mexico on June 8, 2016.

Dr. Mike Sell has recently completed the manuscript for *The Blackness of the Black Arts Movement: African American Performance, Politics, and Community in the 1960s and Beyond* and started work on a book identifying and exploring the seven ways that the avant-garde paradigm functions in video games, video game culture, and video games discourse. An essay-length digest of that text will be part of a proposed special issue on "Avatars of Modernity" for the journal *modernism/modernity*. He is serving as the 1960s volume editor for the *Methuen Decades of Modern American Playwriting* series, contributing two essays, one that surveys 1960s drama, theatre, and performance, the other the broader cultural, social, political, and media

history of the decade. His co-authored essay, "Telling the Telling of the Tale: A Dialogue," appears in *Preservation, Radicalism, and the Avant-Garde Canon* (Palgrave Macmillan), and articles on "Racialization" and "War" appear in the reference guide *Reading Contemporary Performance* (Routledge). He delivered the keynote on "Ethics and Artifacts: Historicizing the Black Arts Movement" at the Comparative Studies Student Association conference at Florida Atlantic University in April 2016. He co-convoked a working group on "Video Games and Gaming: Towards a Transmedial Analysis" at the 2016 American Society for Theatre Research conference, the first of its kind for that organization. For the second time, he has been elected to the Executive Committee of ASTR, this time as a member of the Committee on Conferences and the Conference Program Committee, which will plan the 2017 meeting. On September 14, Director Edgar Wright of *Shaun of the Dead* and *Scott Pilgrim vs The World* fame congratulated him on writing a better Twitter joke. You can follow him @mike_sell.

Dr. Ken Sherwood presented "Distanced Sounding: Versioning Poems in the Digital Audio Archive" at the 2016 MLA in Austin and gave the keynote address "Born-Digital Literature and Pedagogy" SCC Creative Writing Festival in April. Continuing the pedagogical turn, he is currently working on "Tuning The Ear: A Pedagogical Approach to Poetry Audio" for a panel he organized at NEMLA 2017 entitled Digital Humanities Approaches to Teaching Recorded Poetry/Archives. In addition to coordinating a Digital Humanities reading group with **Dr. Melanie Holm**, he is looking forward to facilitating a "Creative Coding" workshop this coming semester as part of his work with the IUP Center for Digital Humanities and Culture.

Dr. Tom Slater has signed a contract with Wayne State University Press to publish his manuscript titled *Silent Screenwriter June Mathis: Her Triumphs, Struggles, and Importance Today*. Known at one time as the most powerful woman in Hollywood, Mathis began performing on stage in 1898 when she was eleven. After touring the country for many years in various vaudeville and theater companies, she decided to go into screenwriting in 1914. By 1918, she was head of Metro's scenario department and reached a career peak in 1921 when her writing and casting of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* elevated Rudolph Valentino to stardom. In 1927, she died suddenly and dramatically while attending a Broadway play. The due date for the manuscript, which analyzes Mathis's stage career, screenwriting,

independent work, collaborations, and relations to the industry, is next May. In the meantime, Dr. Slater will be presenting on Max Brooks's graphic novel, *Harlem Hellfighters*, at the PCEA Conference at IUP in March and on "On Her Own and In Collaboration: June Mathis at the Heart of Metro, 1915-1920" at the Popular Culture Association Conference at San Diego in April.

Dr. Todd Nathan Thompson was recently appointed as the Assistant Chair to the English Department. Along with his new administrative position, Dr. Thompson has been busy as a scholar. This past year his book chapter "'Homespun,' 'Indian Corn,' and the 'indigestible...Stamp Act': An Empire of Stereotype in Franklin's Letters to the London Press" was published in *Community without Consent: New Perspectives on the Stamp Act*, edited by Zach Hutchins and published by Dartmouth College Press. Further, Dr. Thompson, along with 2015 IUP alumnus **Jessica Showalter**, had an academic blog post, "Databases and Digital Editions of Nineteenth-Century Newspaper Poetry," published on July 13, 2015 through *EBSCO Host*. Also, on the conference front, Dr. Thompson presented "The Backwoodsman Abroad: Tall Tales, the South Seas, and Comic Imperialism" at the American Literature Association conference in San Francisco, CA on May 26-29, 2016; he additionally presented "'Put on my girdle of bark': Transcendentalism and the Pacific Frontier" at the American Literature Association Symposium on Frontiers and Borders in American Literature in San Antonio, TX on February 25-27, 2016.

Dr. Veronica Watson published "Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death" in the collection *Our Black Sons Matter: Mothers Talk about their Fears, Sorrows, and Hopes*, edited by George Yancy, Maria Davidson and Susan Hadley (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). She also presented two papers at the 2016 National Women's Studies Association conference: "Dismantling Disengagement: Teaching the Literature of White Estrangement as Transgressive and Transformative Connection" and "Lynching Women: Policing the Black Female Body, A Literary Exploration."

Dr. Michael T. Williamson was elected by the Literature and Criticism Committee to serve a three-year term as the Coordinator of our MA in Literature Program and our Composition and MA in Literature Program. He has been busy working on professional networking and professional presentations with our MA students. Volume 38 of *Pennsylvania English*, the journal he edits, is nearing completion. The journal publishes

creative writing by established writers who have published in prestigious magazines such as *The Partisan Review* and *The New Yorker*. We are also pleased to publish an essay on *The Unwritten* and literary Romanticism by IUP Literature and Criticism Ph.D. candidate **Nick Katsiadas** in our current issue and look forward to publishing an essay, “Teaching Asian American and Asian Diasporic Women’s Literature,” by **Dr. Lingyan Yang** in Volume 39. An essay on the Orientalized heroine of Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* by IUP Ph.D. candidate **Issam Aldowkat** is also in the works. Dr. Williamson’s book, *The Heart of the World: Mysticism and Romanticism in Holocaust and Interwar Yiddish Poetry*, is forthcoming from Northwestern University Press. He presented a paper, “Take a Book of Records and Record: Ethnography, Commemoration, and Imagined Surveillance in the Eastern European Space Between,” at the Space Between: Literature and Culture 1914-1945 conference at the McGill University in Montreal this summer. That paper led to a collaborative project—co-editing a special issue of *The Space Between* journal on Eastern European Literature in collaboration with the scholar of Soviet Russian history, Alexis Pogorelskin. This autumn, Dr. Williamson will present a paper on representing pre-Holocaust Jewish culture in graphic novels at the Pennsylvania College English Association conference, a paper on Soviet censorship and Eastern European literary history at the Modernist Studies Association conference, and a paper on Modernist Studies and Religion at that same conference. He is currently revising an essay on the theme of dissolution in Yiddish poetry and an essay on representations of the Polish nation by British women writers from 1800 to 1945. Finally, he looks forward to working with M.A. Literature student **Eric Wentz** on a project related to poetry manuscripts by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, an important nineteenth century woman poet. Mr. Wentz recently returned from London (UK) where he engaged in grant-funded study of Barrett Browning’s manuscripts at the British Museum.\

Dr. Lingyan Yang has been approved to take a sabbatical leave for the Fall 2017 to work on her book project, *Asian American and Asian Diasporic Aesthetics and Form*.



Introducing: Sustainability Studies at IUP

By: **Dr. Susan Comfort**

I am frequently asked why, as a faculty member from an English department, I would want to teach and research Sustainability Studies. What does someone like me, from a Humanities background, know about sustainability? What does sustainability mean anyway? And, how in



the world did I become interested? My responses to these questions are often complicated, to say the least, but I usually begin by explaining that I grew up with parents who both worked at the intersection of environmental and social issues. My stepfather was an industrial hygienist and my mother was an urban planner, and they were part of a generation in this country who viewed their scientific-technical expertise in a larger humanistic context of working for public good and social justice. Some of their influence rubbed off on me, and over the years my interest in these issues grew—especially in graduate school in Austin, Texas, where there were some lively battles that connected environment and social justice issues. One battle that had a strong impact was the struggle to save Barton Springs, a beloved natural spring in the city center, from upscale real-estate development that would pollute the aquifer feeding the springs. Thanks to some stellar investigative research by local activists, we learned that the real-estate developer behind the project, James “Jim-Bob” Moffat was also the CEO of Freeport-McMoRan, a gold and copper mining corporation that had despoiled water and land in its mining operations in West Papua, Indonesia, while also assisting the Indonesian state in outright political repression of indigenous people impacted by the mining. For me, as for many of us, what was a local environmental conservation battle became a human rights and global justice issue.

When asked about my interest in Sustainability Studies, I refer to these pivotal moments, but also to postcolonial literature, which has been a major influence. It's always surprising to me when people don't appreciate the degree to which literature shapes our perceptions of and attitudes toward the environment. Literature, as any ecocritic will tell you, has the capacity to involve us empathetically in environmental impacts beyond our immediate temporal or spatial horizons. Many students have read or heard of Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," which discusses the prolonged frame of most environmental catastrophes, such as the degradations by acid-mine drainage or toxic power plant emissions that are usually invisible to us. Many environmental justice and ecofeminist critics, like Greta Gaard (who came to IUP last year as part of the Sustainability Studies colloquium series) are interested in "culture jamming"—that is, the critical work that literature can do to interrupt the typical ways of thinking about environmental issues, such as climate change, which is usually presented to us from only a scientific-technical perspective, and not from the queer climate justice point-of-view that Gaard represents. This point-of-view spotlights unequal impacts by climate change on women and GLBTQ people. In Gaard's words, "Climate change exacerbates pressures on marginalized people first," among which are queer and transgender persons who frequently experience disproportionate harassment, discrimination and violence after climate-related disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina ("Ecofeminism and climate change." *Women Studies International Forum*. 49. 2015).

When I teach literature in courses on sustainability or global environmental justice, I emphasize, in addition to literature's keen insight into questions of justice, how it can also alter our understanding of identity, which we typically apprehend as private and individual. I just discovered, for example, how useful it is to teach Wangari Maathai's memoir, *Unbowed*, together with the website on Kenya's Green Belt Movement (<http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>). The memoir, which came out shortly after Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, is laid out for us to understand her story as an individual overcoming long odds to establish this movement. This representation contrasts pretty strikingly with the website, which presents her work as part of an ongoing, worldwide collective movement.

Those feelings of possibility that literature can produce are also among the reasons why I think literature, and the environmental or sustainable humanities (as the field has come to be called), has a crucial role to play in

Sustainability Studies. From teaching books like *Unbowed*, I think that literature can inspire positive agency. I could also cite the current ongoing #NoDALP struggle, in which the trope of "protection"—specifically the protection of water—has sprung up to reframe stories of environmental struggle, from negatively cast accounts about "fighting against something," to ones about radical forms of affirmative activism, or "radical love," as some call this new activism. Much of my approach to ecoliterature is taken from my habit, after many years teaching marxist-feminist and postcolonial theory, and now affect theory and ecocriticism, to historicize how things came to be how they are, and how things came to feel the way they do. For example, after reading Linda Hogan's "What Holds the Water, What Holds the Light," my students and I have explored the political ecology of drinking water from plastic bottles. The exercise allows us to historicize neoliberalism's "new enclosures" of water, the toxicities of plastics, and also how these structural forces mediate the seemingly simple act of taking a sip of water. We are reminded, as Greta Gaard has eloquently put, that "part of the work of sustainability has to be enlivening the connections we feel," and that means especially paying attention to emotions that motivate us, such as, in her words, "anger that feels bubbly and acidic."

From this and many other teaching opportunities in my literature courses, particularly in the Literature & Criticism Graduate Program, I have been able to practice an approach to knowledge-production that has helped me in the effort to establish a Sustainability Studies minor program here at IUP. The Sustainability minor, now in its second year, has grown quickly to include 19 student minors, and 18 affiliated faculty from across disciplines and colleges on campus. This region, as most of you will know, has a legacy of internal colonization around timber, oil, coal, and natural gas. 2,500 miles of Pennsylvania streams do not support life because of that legacy (Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection 1999), and we have some of the highest unemployment and lowest per capita incomes in the country. Given this history, we wanted to develop concepts of 'sustainability' able to address the cultural, social and political systems behind these inequalities. Toward that end, we have designed a minor that includes an interdisciplinary core course, a capstone synthesis experience, and a menu of courses drawn from three disciplinary clusters in the humanities; social sciences and environmental policy; and natural sciences. In our teaching and advising, we encourage students to apply integrative approaches that start with holistic generative

questions, such as “How might the adoption of renewable energies change the culture of our daily life?” In this vein, our core course Introduction to Sustainability is organized not by disciplinary perspectives, but through the critical frameworks of environmental justice, social ecology and ecofeminism, so that we are able to emphasize how sustainability issues are framed and reframed through struggles by organizations and groups battling to define its goals and agendas. In the course, for example, we study some history of status quo discourses of sustainability, starting with the 1987 Brundtland Commission report, Our Common Future, which, in a nearly universally accepted definition, conceptualized sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” As we do so, we also focus on typically ignored, contradictory aspects of the report that call for, and I quote, “freer market access for products of developing countries,” and “significantly larger capital flows”—wording that signifies a goal of intensified extraction that runs counter to sustainability.

Our pedagogy is complimented by our efforts to connect with activism that also strives to encounter material and ideological structures through transformative engagement. For example, we regularly partner with a community group working on environmental and social justice, The Center for Community Growth, to build those connections. We also host speakers involved in civil engagement and environmental justice activism, such as representatives from CELDF, the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, a legal advisory organization that changes the fundamental legal framework of environmental law in order to advance the rights of communities and the rights of nature against large fossil fuel corporations.

So far, Sustainability Studies has been doing well, and it promises to be a vital program, but there is still much that needs to be done. We are hoping to encourage more collaboration across disciplines among faculty as well as students, and we’re exploring how to collaborate with campus programs, such as the Center for Multiculturalism and also Residence Life and Dining, to establish practical opportunities for permaculture food cultivation, cross-cultural learning and place-based research on social justice. Literature students have much to contribute to these efforts: our methods for engaging cultural, social and historical questions when we read and think, especially about the environment, are crucial for

engaging in debates here and elsewhere about how to transition to a just sustainable future.

Student & Alumni News!

Sahar Al-Shoubaki, a second year Ph.D. student in English Literature and Criticism, presented a paper entitled “Arab American Muslim Women: Feminist Quest for a New Identity in Mohja Kahf’s *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*” at Penn State University’s Women’s Studies Graduate Organization Annual Conference in February 2016. Sahar served as a panel moderator at IUP’s English Graduate Organization Interdisciplinary Conference in February 2016 and also won the IUP Women’s Leadership Award 2016. Sahar tutored at the American Language Institute and is a now Graduate Assistant at her department.

Sultan Alquthami presented “Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery in Literature” in March of 2016 at the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) conference at Harvard University and “Neocolonial Strategies of Occupation: Sovereignty and Place” in April 2016 at the Transnational American Graduate Conference at SUNY Binghamton.

Gregory Luke Chwala presented a paper at the 41st annual Caribbean Studies Association Conference, Caribbean Global Movements, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, entitled “Decolonial Queer Ecologies in the Fiction of Michelle Cliff.” His book chapter “Reinventing and Renegotiating a Queer Nigerian Identity in Chris Abani’s *GraceLand*” was also published in late 2015 in *Ways of Queering, Ways of Seeing*.

Nicol Epple presented the paper, “Holy Songs of Erotica: The Ultimate-Intimate Christian Experience,” at the Interdisciplinary.net conference, Exploring Spirituality and Sexuality, hosted at Mansfield College, Oxford, this past July. In August, as Founder and Executive Director of The LOV Foundation, Inc., Nicol directed LOV’s inaugural international project. The Foundation is partnering with a group of Costa Rican women developing sustainable economic opportunities.

Peter Faziani has had a super totally awesome and busy year. He has participated in a panel entitled “Mash-Up and Misrepresentations: Creative Work in a World of Mass Production” and presented a paper entitled “Voicing the Unvoiced: Slavery and Abolitionism in the

Naïve North as Demonstrated in Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* and Frederick Douglas' *The Heroic Slave* at the 2016 IUP English Graduate Organization Conference. He also presented at the 2016 Space Between Society Annual Conference in Montreal with a paper entitled "Everything but the Kitchen Sync – Mass Observation and George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*." In addition to his scholarly work, the postcard poetry journal Red Flag Poetry founded by Peter is now in entering its third year and with the help and support of faculty and staff of the IUP English Department, the project is now sending postcards to eighteen states and two Canadian provinces. Red Flag Poetry publishes monthly poems by nationally known and developing poets on postcards and delivers them to the subscriber's mailbox and has recently expanded into publishing chapbooks and will release their first full-length book of poetry in January. Finally, in the past year Peter has had four poems, "Moving into Temperance," "Childhood Musings #2," and "I've Got this Friend #2" and "I Never Owned a Tamagotchi" published respectively in 2016 editions of *Silver Birch Press*, *Sandy River Review*, while the last two were in *Words Dance*.

Charity Gibson presented "Literary Lure in the Ozarks?" at Missouri State University's 9th annual Ozark Symposium held in Westplains, Missouri on September 19, 2015.

In May of 2016, **Abigail Hennon** graduated with an M.A. in English Literature from East Carolina University

and was awarded the distinction of Most Outstanding M.A. Graduate Student. During her second year at ECU, Abigail taught two different composition classes: Foundations of College Writing and Writing About the Disciplines. In July 2015, she presented an early draft of her Comprehensive Assessment Project, "Quentin Compson: The Gothic Heroine in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*," at the Southern Writers/Southern Writing conference, the graduate portion of the Annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, in Oxford, MS. In April 2016, she presented "Behind Closed Doors: Mary Gaitskill's 'Trying to Be' and 'Secretary'" at the English Graduate Student Organization conference at ECU in Greenville, NC. In this first semester of her Ph.D. in English Literature and Criticism at IUP, she has already begun to establish a strong sense of professional development as an editorial assistant for *Works & Days*. As one of the editors for the Fall 2016 L&C Program newsletter, Abigail interviewed Dr. Gian Pagnucci about his Comic Studies issue of *Works & Days*. Abigail has been awarded an IUP English department Doctoral Fellowship and has also been chosen as a recipient of the Julius P. Filcik Doctoral Fellowship for 2016–17. This award is in recognition of "strong academic preparation, potential for excellence in teaching and research, and the ability to contribute to the community of doctoral scholars at IUP."

Along with Michaela O'Toole and Mark DiMauro, **Nick Katsiadis** helmed the new English Department organization: Pop Culture Methodologies (PCM). PCM just had its inaugural meeting in September 2016 and presented in the 6 O'Clock Series for Banned Books Week, in which Nick presented "An Ethics of Inclusion: Greg Rucka and J. H. Williams III's *Batwoman*." In March, he chaired a panel focusing "The Myth of Comics History" at the 2016 PCA/ACA National Conference in Seattle, WA, in which he presented "*The Unwritten*: Romanticism in Comics?" In August 2016, he submitted this paper to the Pennsylvania College English Association, which was accepted for publication in their forthcoming Fall 2016 volume.



Students converse outside new HSS building

Alexandra Lykissas presented her paper "Gothic Anxieties—Then and Now: A Post-9/11 Examination of the Gothic in *Supernatural*" at the International Gothic Association Conference on August 1, 2015,

in Vancouver, Canada. That presentation became a solicited chapter, titled "Gothic Anxieties—Then and Now: A Post-9/11 Examination of the Gothic [in *Supernatural*]" published in the collection *The Gothic Tradition in Supernatural: Essays on the Television Series*, edited by Melissa Edmundson and published by McFarland Press in April 2016.

Olivia Maderer presented "Max Caulfield vs. the World: How Ludoaffect Destabilizes Patriarchal Monologism in Games," at the Midwest Pop Culture Conference on Oct. 6-9 in Chicago. She summarized her definition of "ludoaffect" and presented how it can be used to (primarily) undo patriarchal discourse, specifically in the game "Life is Strange." Olivia also presented "Why Must the Fireflies Die So Young?": How 'The Sky Crawlers' and 'Grave of the Fireflies' Give Children Voice in War" at FilmAsia, a conference for IAFOR, on Oct. 27-30 in Kobe, Japan. This was Olivia's first film conference. Her paper was about how anime films, specifically two films, were changing how war films presented children. The anime films presented the children as individuals with value and voice, while traditional war films objectively used children as symbols. Olivia is working with Dr. Sell and members of Popular Culture Methodologies on this spring's Critical Play Colloquium Series, which will address various aspects of critical play, primarily centered on digital gaming. Olivia also plans on presenting at the 2017 conference organized by IUP's English Graduate Organization.

Reza Parchizadeh, Ph.D. candidate in English Literature and Criticism, co-founded the Future of Iran foundation for the promotion of democracy and human rights in Iran. In that regard, Reza has made frequent television appearances around the world as political theorist and analyst. Reza also co-founded Tahlil Rooz (Daily Analysis), the first Persian-language think tank, in which he publishes his analysis of the sociopolitical condition in the Middle East in general and Iran in particular. In Tahlil Rooz Reza occasionally publishes in English on sociopolitical, historical, philosophical and literary themes as well. Some of his articles in English are "The Condition in Myth," "Ares and Aphrodite: A Revelation of Politics in Mythology," "A Political Note on Nordic/Persian Mythologies," and "I and Exotic Green Things." Reza has also contributed to international think tanks and political/security journals *Albawabh*, *Algemeiner*, *American Thinker*, *Clarion Project*, *Jerusalem Online*, *Journal of Egypt*, *Mackenzie Institute*, *The Hill*, and *The Saudi*. Some of his contributions include "Why it is Ill-advised to Deal with

Iran under the Mullahs," "Iran-Saudi Crisis as a Measure for Boosting the Upcoming Elections in Iran," "What is a 'Reformist' in the Context of Iranian Politics?" "The Collapsing State System and the Western Stake in the Middle East," "Iran's 'Heroic Flexibility' Comes to an End," "Iran's War in Syria to Uphold Hezbollah in Lebanon," "The Mullahs Mount a Crusade against the English Language," "Russophilia and Russian Expansionism in the Middle East," "A Fatwa for Some Seasons," and "The Story of an Iranian Dissident." Reza's academic article, "How Shakespeare Perpetuates the Tudor Myth," was published in the summer issue of *Popular Culture Review*. Reza is going to write his doctoral dissertation along similar lines, on the subject of Shakespeare's influence on English political thought. Other articles by Reza from the past year include: "The Supreme Leader's Meaningful Appointment of New Chief of Staff," "The Supreme Leader Scooped the Elections in Iran," "Iranian Regime Becomes More Aggressive as a Result of the Nuclear Deal," "Moderate/Reformist Victory in Iranian Elections is a Shameless Lie," "The Nuclear Fatwa is a Charade," "Middle Eastern and Muslim Dissidents' Perception of the US Elections," "Reza Parchizadeh: The Nuclear Deal Will Not Guarantee World Peace," "John Batchelor & Reza Parchizadeh on the Persian Gulf Crisis," "Reza Parchizadeh: The Islamic Republic is Buying Time with the Nuclear Deal," "A Political Tour of the Middle East with Parchizadeh," "How the Islamic Regime Oppressed Women in Iran," "Iran Launches a Holy War on the English Language," and "The Supreme Leader Still Reigns Supreme."

Sarah Poeppel is a first year PhD student in the English Literature and Criticism program. In May of 2016 she graduated from Binghamton University with her MA in English Literature. Since starting at IUP in the fall, she assisted Dr. Tanya Heflin with IUP's Banned Books Week events, and wrote the article "Banned Books Week 2016: Celebrating Diverse Voices" for the Fall 2016 L&C Program Newsletter. Sarah has also been awarded an IUP English Department Doctoral Fellowship.

Mary Reading is currently a 3rd year Ph.D. candidate. This Fall 2016, she has been teaching Composition classes at University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown, Developmental and Composition classes at Westmoreland County Community College, and IDS-400 Diversity course online at Southern New Hampshire University. In June 2016, Mary presented a paper for the Caribbean Studies Association in Haiti. Her paper was titled, "Gender Oppression and Colonial Power in Caryl

Phillips' *The Lost Child*". In October 2016 Mary presented her paper titled "The Changing Scope of Queer Cinema" in Japan at FilmAsia in Kobe, Japan. At IUP she assisted with the Poetry Out Loud Regional Competition as a Prompter in February 2016. She also assisted as a judge for the online Without a Box Student Film Competition in March 2016.

Samantha Rump is currently enrolled in her first semester of the Literature and Criticism Ph.D. program. She taught Rhetoric and Composition for the Gussin Spiritan Division at Duquesne University this past summer. She currently facilitates Imaginative Literature for the Gussin Spiritan Division and teaches three sections of Strategies for Academic Success at Duquesne University. Prior to her work at Duquesne and beginning the program at IUP, she presented her essay, "Transatlantic and *The Invention of Wings*: Historiographic Metafiction in Contemporary Novels and the Importance of Intersectionality on the Journey to Self-Knowledge," at EAPSU held at Slippery Rock University in October of 2015.

Carl Sell, a first year Ph.D. student in the English Literature and Criticism program, who also holds an M.A. in English from IUP, has had two teaching contracts over the past year. His first contract was with Penn State Altoona for the 2015–16 academic year, teaching five sections of Composition. His second and current contract is with Penn Highlands Community College where he has taught Composition and Intro to Composition over the summer and currently teaches Composition. While in the Ph.D. program, Carl is also a Professional Writing Tutor at the Blair campus of Penn Highlands Community College. This past spring, Carl gave a guest lecture on Arthurian Adaptations at Bedford County Library as part of Library Week. Beginning this fall, Carl is also the president for IUP's English Graduate Organization (EGO).

In 2016, **Jirayu Sinsiri** presented papers at two conferences. On February 27, 2016, she presented her paper, "A Journey of Feminist Seed in Butler's *Parable of the Sower*," at the 2016 EGO Conference, organized by IUP's English Graduate Organization. Jirayu also presented another paper, "A Thai Pastoral Novel: 'A Child of the Northeast' by Kampon Boontawee," at the Sixth Asian Conference on Asian Studies (ACAS2016), organized by IAFOR in Japan during June 2-5, 2016.

Rochelle Spencer published an essay, "[Afro-Surreal and Afro-Futuristic Visual Technologies in Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*](#)" in *Pivot: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies and Thought* (2016).

Matthew Stumpf presented his paper entitled "'They Wrote About Ghosts': Establishing the Novelty of War in John W. DeForest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*" at the Nineteenth Century Studies Association (NCSA) conference held in Lincoln, Nebraska on April 15, 2016. Along with the NCSA conference, Matthew also presented in a roundtable with other IUP students Wesley McMasters, Nadia Zamin, and Emmett Ryan regarding the fostering of common ground between the fields of Composition and Literature at the 47th annual College English Association national conference in Denver, Colorado on Mar 31, 2016. Also, Matthew had the privilege to co-coordinate last spring's English Graduate Organization (EGO) Interdisciplinary Graduate conference, held annually on the Indiana University of Pennsylvania campus during the last weekend in February. In addition, Matthew presented his paper, "I Will Remain a Soldier until the War is Won:" An Investigation of Transgenerational Trauma in Bebe Moore Campbell's *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine*" at the EGO conference. Last year's conference revolved around the theme of representing misrepresented and underrepresented voices in all fields of study and was a monumental success, with presenters coming from as far away as Brazil and the UK. Along with Matthew's busy conference season, he has also continued working as an editor for the department-funded poetry journal *Red Flag Poetry*, which strives to publish pithy poetry through the medium of the postcard and the email in order to brighten up the subscriber's mailbox and inbox, which often become clouded with external responsibilities. Further, the most recent edition of *Works & Days*, a journal focused on the exploration of problems in cultural studies, pedagogy, and institutional critique, especially as they are impacted by the global economic crisis of late capitalism, of which Matthew is an editorial assistant, released their volume entitled: *Scholactivism: Reflections on Transforming Praxis In and Beyond the Classroom*. This volume focuses on the transference of academic scholarship into grassroots activism, as well as the evolution of the scholar-activist in the 21st century, including contributions from scholar/activists based all over the globe.

In February, **Samantha J. Vertosick**, a Ph.D. candidate in the Literature and Criticism program, attended the

37th Annual Southwestern Popular/American Culture Association Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her paper, “Beyond the Veil: The Narrative Functions of Death in the *Harry Potter* Series” won the award for Best Graduate Paper in Science Fiction and Fantasy at the conference. Additionally, Samantha’s chapter “Sympathy for the Devil: The Neutralization of Traditionally Evil Figures” was published in Melissa Edmundson’s *The Gothic Tradition in Supernatural: Essays on the Television Series* in April.

Rachael Warmington is a doctoral candidate at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She earned her B.A. in English from Montclair State University, M.A. in English from Seton Hall University, and her MFA at City College of New York, City University of New York. Rachael presented her paper “Valiant Warriors, Adulterers and Witches: Unstable Representations of Character in Icelandic Adaptations and Appropriations of Arthurian Legend” at the Fifty-First International Congress on Medieval Studies this past May. In addition, Rachael presented her paper “Valiant Warriors, Adulterers and Witches: Unstable Representations of Character in Contemporary Adaptations and Appropriations of Arthurian Legend” at the 27th annual Mid-Atlantic Popular & American Culture Association Conference this November. Her Master’s thesis “The Culture of Beards in Shakespeare” was cited this fall by *National Geographic* on their education blog. She is also the editor-in-chief of the academic journal *Wachung Review*. Rachael is first vice president for the New Jersey College English Association and will be chairing their annual conference this coming spring.

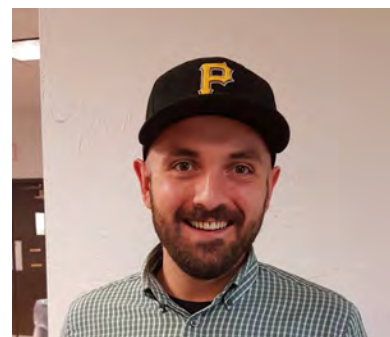
Marie Webb is currently a first year doctoral student in the Composition and TESOL program. In the summer of 2016, she published two co-authored research studies. She was first author on a CATESOL Journal publication titled, “Does the Flipped Classroom Lead to Increased Gains on Learning Outcomes in ESL/EFL Contexts?,” which found that experimental courses out performed control courses and results related to grammar outcomes were statistically significant ($P > .01$). Marie’s study may be used as a starting point for future research models investigating effects of flipped instruction on learning outcomes. She was second author of the TESOL Journal article titled “The Flipped Experience for Chinese University Students Studying English as a Foreign Language,” which explored perceptions of EFL students in China about the flipped framework. Results demonstrated that students in the flipped sections had more positive attitudes to the language learning

experience than students in the non-flipped sections. In November 2016, Marie traveled to the CATESOL annual conference to present a practical presentation titled “Making Your Assessments More Authentic.”

On May 6, 2016, **Eric Wentz**, an MA student and middle school English teacher at Greater Johnstown School District, presented his paper, “Posterity is smiling on our knees convicting us of folly: The Rhetoric of Children and Faith in Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows*,” at the Brooklyn College Graduate English Conference, “Writing as Activism: Motivating Social and Political Shifts.” Eric began working on this paper while taking English 764 with Dr. Michael T. Williamson. His research focuses on how Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s role as a female poet and mother provided her with a unique perspective on children that she shares with readers of her poetry in order to persuade them to political action. In August, Eric seized the opportunity to develop his research skills through working with manuscripts at the British Library in London. He spent a few days reading a collection of manuscripts containing pieces of the original Barrett Browning manuscripts of the poems “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” and *Casa Guidi Windows*. Eric looks forward to using his manuscript research experience to expand his paper on Barrett Browning, and to enhance his teaching of literature.

An Interview with Dr. Michael T. Williamson

By: Matthew Stumpf



Matthew Stumpf: Since you have recently become editor of Pennsylvania English, could you begin by telling us something about this journal?

Dr. Michael T. Williamson: The journal is one of the longest running regional journals of the College English Association, and the editorial board is amazing. We’re working on Volume 39 right now, and we are considering how it will be related to the PCEA conference theme. The art editor, Michael Smithammer,

is working on a call for essays based on the cover of Volume 38. He's thinking about the ways in which different definitions "the graphic" can be layered together.

MS: *Does the journal publish once a year?*

MW: It used to be published twice a year. We moved it to IUP in the hopes that we could get back to that schedule. We are hoping to publish critical and pedagogical essays that are more of a hybrid of academic and creative writing. Dr. Lingyan Yang has a pedagogical and critical piece on teaching writers from the Asian diaspora that should be coming out in Volume 39. For the creative pieces, we accept only a fraction of what we receive. I think it's near 2-5%. And for critical essays about 10% of what we receive gets published.

MS: *What is your role within the editorial team dynamic?*

MW: I do a lot of the communication with authors, a lot of the communication between editors about revisions, and a lot of communication about rejections. John Marsden does an excellent job of turning American prose-- which can often be over-reliant on jargon--into something a lot more beautiful.

MS: *Tell me some more about PCEA, the organization and the conference*

MW: PCEA has been around for a long time. We're really happy and excited to have Oriana Gatta organizing the conference. She's doing a great job. I believe the conference at IUP will be a way to help us find our direction. It should be a place where people feel they can go to test out their ideas. An environment that is....

MS: *Stimulating seems like the word you're looking for*

MW: Yes, stimulating! A stimulus, so that you're stimulating your research while at the same time you're at a very safe but nevertheless not indifferent conference. And I think that is the mistake a lot of regional conferences make -- they become indifferent. One way we can accomplish a more engaged conference experience is by creating conferences with a strong sense of community in addition to an academically rigorous sense of interchange.

MS: *Let's move on to your forthcoming manuscript publication: The Heart of the World: Mysticism and Romanticism in Interwar and Holocaust Yiddish Poetry. What's the significance of this title?*

MW: It comes from the *Tale of the Third Beggar*, which is one of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav's early nineteenth century "Tale of the Seven Beggars." Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav's orally transmitted stories were published in 1812, the same year that the Grimm brothers published *Household and Children's Tales*, so in terms of literary history there were two different kinds of folklore being articulated simultaneously, one in what is now the Belarus/Ukraine area and the other in Germany. What a difference! I mean the difference is between apocalyptic desolation, starvation, and scarcity "We don't have enough food, so we must send our children out to die," on the one hand, and on the other hand, these amazing stories of mystical plenitude. Hasidic Judaism is very different from conventional American reformed Judaism, and it is very, very different from the often hysterically desolate narratives of resentment that characterize German Romanticism and Modernism. Some people can say it's a normal marriage between Judaism and Catholicism because they're both ritual based. But NO! they're totally different. So, mystical or Hasidic Judaism is really this idea that there are these alternative worlds. They're not compensatory, because there hasn't been a trauma. A lot of mystical Judaism is no different from mystical Christianity or mystical Islam; there is this original moment of trauma that has to be addressed, but in Hasidic mysticism that is not the case. Everything is about reparation, but not because there's



been a trauma that is instigated. So, in the story the heart of the world is the *labaab* (that's the Hebrew), it's the heartbeat of the world, what keeps time going, what keeps the world alive. It's in love with a mountain stream that it sees from afar, and it can never get close to the mountain stream because it is too far away to travel. Everything dries up, so they can only yearn for one another, separate from one another. They tell jokes, they tell riddles, they tell parables, they say, as the story of the seven beggars begins, "this is how the people used to be happy and still can be." The heart of the world only exists for one day, and at the end of the day the true man of kindness weaves together the jokes and riddles, and that creates another day. So, literature of plentitude and pleasure creates time.

MS: *Interesting, so what initially sparked your interest in Yiddish poetry?*

MW: I read a book called *Against the Apocalypse* by David Roskies that featured translations of Yiddish poetry. I started giving papers with Dr. Berlin on the topic of Jewish literature. On the ride back from one of our conferences, we started talking about the effects of the war on Jewish literature and how no one was really talking about it in ways we felt could be transmitted to students. So that's when it started, around 1998. For years I just worked with translations, until I came to the realization that they just weren't really cutting it. You can spot a bad translation even if you don't know the original language because you know the sensibility behind the language. I knew Hebrew and the Hebrew alphabet but I didn't know Yiddish, so I came to the conclusion that I would have to teach myself Yiddish. I learned enough so that I could translate. The best way to learn a foreign language is to learn its poetry. But anyways, I learned, for example, that Yehoash is a very interesting and difficult to read poet because he's not a modernist, he's not a romantic, he's not a mystic, he's something uniquely in between and that's where the concept of middle-brow literature comes into play.

MS: *Can you elaborate on this concept for us?*

MW: Virginia Woolf and others came up with the term "middle-brow" to describe literature that didn't have the execution, in terms of its formal structures, to qualify as modernist. It wasn't introspective quite enough, it wasn't experimental enough, and so it was termed middle-brow. And that's what Yehoash was writing; it was this middle-brow literature for people that didn't know that much Hebrew and are in between languages, so a lot of his

work is between one world and the next and that was interesting for writers during the Holocaust, to have this kind of in-betweenness, this flexibility of space.

MS: *It seems to me that your major contention in this text is the idea that three major Yiddish poets "offer important insights into the rich intellectual and artistic interwar texts and contexts that have been obscured by post Holocaust literary thinking." can you tell us what some of these insights are and how they have been obscured by this kind of thinking?*



MW: When we look at the careers of Yehoash, Glatstein and Sutzkever we see a lot more than poets who became fairly well known for their poetry in response to the Holocaust (Glatstein in the US and Sutzkever in Israel) and a poet whose interest in

mysticism and Romantic nature poetry served as a model for Sutzkever's "Holocaust nature poetry." We also see three poets who collected and transmitted a vast body of learning that became, at least for a brief period during the interwar years, Jewish Literary History. My book traces out two strands of that literary history by looking at how these three poets engage with two big movements: the revival of Jewish mysticism and the energetic historicization of Jewish learning (the *Haskalah*, or Jewish Romanticism). Post Holocaust concerns about the function of language to signify anything over the "abyss of history" has made it difficult to look back at pre-Holocaust Jewish literature. Modernist conceptions of history as something that can only be examined when it is in a state of ruin or disintegration also make it difficult to value Yiddish literary productions that weren't modernist in form. In my book, I am following a trend in literary studies, especially Jewish literary studies, that expands the range of what "counts" as Jewish literature and what "counts" as Jewish literary history.

MS: *Later in the introduction to your book you state, "Yehoash's synthesizing function was part of a larger diasporic effort to create alternatives to the political and linguistic divisions of the interwar*

period." What are some of these political and linguistic divisions and how was poetry able to complement the larger diasporic effort?

MW: One division was the division between Hebrew, Yiddish, and English. Another was between secular and sacred literature. Another was between regenerative mysticism and a modernist aesthetics based on history as "shock." Religious divisions centered around assimilationists and varieties of religious perspectives. Political divisions abound. The main diasporic alternative is a definition of Jewishness that is capacious in its textuality. "Jewishness" became a textual identity based on engagements with a variety of Jewish texts. That was very important for people in the Jewish diaspora.

MS: *You make a claim when you state, "Commemorative monuments and rituals establish solidarity and identity in this world, but they do so at the expense of the efforts poets took to create other worlds by setting poetic language apart as a sacred creative force against the destruction." Can you elaborate on this by focusing specifically on the dialectical relationship you establish between commemoration and creative forces?*

MW: Great question. You have found the heart of the book. Elegy (or a poetics based on mourning) resolves itself by transforming the dead into what Peter Sacks calls "substitutive artifacts." In what David Roskies calls the Jewish Literature of Destruction, experiences of trauma are absorbed into traditional Jewish liturgical archetypes. History becomes literature which then is tied to the relationship between ritual language and ritual notions of history as sacred, not secular. To me, the problem is that more people pay attention to monuments and artifacts than to the very interesting and significant body of work that makes up Jewish literature. In a process that the scholar of Jewish mysticism Moshe Idel calls "crisis arcanization," Jewish writers often create texts that are themselves, in Jewish mystical tradition, constitutive of an "other world" -- texts live there, the dead live there, God lives there even in one of Sutzkever's Holocaust poems. Literary history also lives there.



Introducing the New Popular Culture Methodologies Group (PCM)



PCM Senate: Mark DiMauro, Meghan Hurley, Nick Katsiadis, and Micheala O'Toole

Popular Culture Methodologies (PCM) is a new graduate student organization in IUP's English Department. PCM's goals align with the English Department's objectives to foster a community of scholars. They create space, time, and a community for up-and-coming Pop Culture Scholars to develop projects in preparation to share them with larger academic communities. Its growing community represents a variety of fields, including studies in: Adaptation, Critical Video Game, Comics, Digital Humanities, Film and Media, Ecocriticism and Sustainability, Gender, Sexuality & Queer Theory, Critical Race, Fandom, Science Fiction, and Fairy Tales and Fantasy among others. Not only does PCM create space and time for graduate students to develop ongoing projects, but the community also focuses on the importance for scholars to participate in the IUP campus community.

Thanks to Dr. Tanya Heflin, PCM gained much ground and interest in the 2016 Fall Semester. Their Six O'Clock series kicked off Banned Books Week, with presentations on video game censorship, banned underground theatre, Critical Race Studies in relation to *Star Trek*, and banned comic book narratives, specifically *Batwoman*. Moving forward into the Spring Semester, they are co-hosting the 2017 Annual EGO Conference

with IUP's English Graduate Organization. With much support from the faculty and student body, PCM quickly established itself as a necessary and valuable organization for IUP's burgeoning Pop Culture scholars in the English Department. PCM invites graduate students from the MA and PhD tracks to become members, but they also provide various bridges to undergraduates dedicated to developing Pop Culture scholarship. Should anyone wish to make inquiries, please contact any of PCM's Senate leaders:

Meghan Hurley (m.m.hurley@iup.edu),
 Mark DiMauro (m.t.dimauro@iup.edu),
 Michaela O'Toole (m.a.otoole2@iup.edu),
 Nick Katsiadis (n.p.katsiadis@iup.edu).

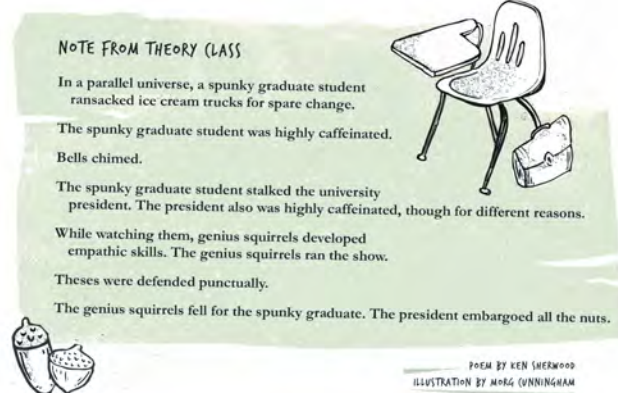
Red Flag Poetry: A Reprieve from Junk Mail

By: Matthew Stumpf



On a drive back from their home state of Michigan, Peter Faziani and his wife kept watching the mailboxes as they passed their vehicle. One by one these seemingly antiquated boxes kept passing by like fence posts, and Peter thought to himself, “how can I make checking the mailbox an enjoyable experience again?” This question may seem an odd one, but believe it or not, Peter, and his now team of four, are accomplishing this goal every month. Fueled by a love of poetry, accompanied by the drive to brightening someone's day, Peter Faziani, Wesley McMasters, Matthew Stumpf, and Sarah Everett have teamed up to publish pithy poetry that employs interesting and innovative language, images, or content through the medium of a postcard sent monthly to your mailbox. Each postcard features an original poem highlighted by an original piece of artwork, and every subscriber receives one postcard per month along with another poem sent to their email through the Red Flag Poetry Express service. By publishing emerging poets and artists from both within the IUP community as well

as across North America, Red Flag strives to feature works from all parts of the aesthetic spectrum. From playful prose to the serious sonnet, Red Flag believes in poetry. Why poetry? Red Flag trusts that poetry is powerful enough to make people think. Poets challenge their readers to interpret and experience elements of life that may be hard to understand, or painful, or filled with ecstasy; and through their poetry they give readers the tools needed to comprehend those parts of the human experience that often elude us. In appreciation of Red Flag's mission, the Literature & Criticism program at IUP has graciously funded the project for over a year now. Due to this funding, any student with a valid IUP email address can subscribe for free, which has caused immense growth in the project, resulting in the introduction of book publishing. This introduction has been helped along by the publication of two chapbooks from students within the Literature & Criticism program: AJ Schmitz and Brandon Galm. That being said, Red Flag plans to stay true to its roots in offering a monthly reprieve from junk mail and bills to its subscribers now and on into the future. So visit redflagpoetry.com to subscribe and check out the work Red Flag has already done, you can feel good about supporting this burgeoning artistic community at IUP.



September's postcard featuring Dr. Kenneth Sherwood

The EGO Page: A Letter From the President

Hello all!

I hope this year is finding everyone well and in the swing of things with many campus events to attend, friends to make, colleagues to meet, and, of course, studying and

coursework. I would first like to thank everyone for their continued support and confidence, as the English Graduate Organization could not exist without all of you. Personally, it is good to be back and a part of this wonderful organization that has attached itself to a magnificent community of scholars—if I may use Dr. Thompson's oft-told phrase. I would also like to thank last year's EGO officers for their service, not only to the organization, but also to the university and our scholarly community. Without their hard work we would not be the group we are today.

As most of you know, EGO started the year out with a get-together at H. B. Culpepper's, a members' favorite for years now. EGO would like to acknowledge the members of the Composition and TESOL programs who came out to support us, as well as those EGO members who attended despite the rainy weather. Culpepper's nights will continue to occur on select Thursday nights from 8 PM to 10 PM, so that students in the MA and PhD programs can decompress, hang out, and get to know their fellow graduate students. We hope to keep this tradition alive and well, therefore we encourage you to come out and relax with your friends and colleagues. EGO also held our annual Fall Book and Bake Sale where we had a stellar turnout and sold a lot of books, most of which were donated by our students and faculty, with special thanks to Dr. Gail Berlin and Dr. Mike Sell for their very generous donations.

I would also like to take this time to thank another campus group, Popular Culture Methodologies, for graciously accepting our invitation to collaborate on the 2017 English Graduate Organization Interdisciplinary conference, our organization's most ambitious and important event. EGO asked PCM to work with us out of our continued desire to build and maintain the community of scholars that IUP fosters, which is an important notion to the officers and myself. We hope that this year's conference will be the biggest and best conference yet, and we are thrilled to work with PCM to make that happen. In years past, many talented individuals have gathered here at IUP to present their outstanding scholarship. These scholars come from around the world, as well as from local universities in the tri-state area. This year's broad theme is "Cultural Shifts," which encourages papers and presentations from all disciplines and student groups. We are excited for the conference and hope to see all of you there.

Although I did not start this year as EGO's President, I was initially honored with the position of Vice President.

EGO reevaluated its goals and we experienced a change in leadership and in the direction of the organization. Our former President, Derek Smeltzer, led EGO for the first half of the fall semester, but when he stepped down, EGO had to restructure itself. I would like to take this time to thank Derek for his hard work and service, and recognize him as an outstanding member of this organization. I would also like to thank our Co-advisors, Dr. Melanie Holm and Dr. Michael T. Williamson for their support and assistance during this time of restructuring and reestablishing. I would especially like to thank EGO's new Vice President, Matthew Stumpf, for assisting me with the presidential duties, for pulling double officer duty as our Vice President and our Treasurer, and for guiding me through the rigors of becoming President of the organization.

I would additionally like to acknowledge the other EGO officers for their hard work, determination, and support, for both myself in my new role, and for embracing EGO wholeheartedly as we reintroduce ourselves to our fellow graduate students. Thank you to our Webmaster, Alex Hagood, who may be our newest officer, but is the one we all rely on to maintain our social media, which is all too often a thankless job. Thank you as well to our Public Relations officer, Shane Sedlemyer, who always sends out the right emails at the right time. Another thank you goes out to our Historian, Meghan Hurley, a tireless worker. Our Secretary, Olivia Maderer, is also deserving of thanks for keeping us all organized and reminding us what we said at each meeting. And last, but most certainly not least, a huge thank you goes out to our Social Events Coordinator, Kathrine Clark, who has organized events for EGO this year. I appreciate all of the time, effort, and hard work that each of you have put into making our organization great, and I am honored to serve as an officer with you all.

For their support and confidence I would finally like to thank Dr. David Downing, Director of Graduate Studies in Literature and Criticism, Dr. Gian Pagnucci, English Department Chair, Dr. Yaw Asamoah, Dean to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Dr. Mike Driscoll, President of IUP.

If you are interested in EGO, would like more information about the upcoming conference, or would like to become more involved in our events, please feel free to email me at c.b.sell@iup.edu.

With the highest regards,
Carl B. Sell, President, English Graduate Organization



EGO Cabinet (from the left):

Vice President/Treasurer: Matthew Stumpf

President: Carl Sell

Secretary: Olivia Maderer

Social Events Coordinator: Kathrine Clark

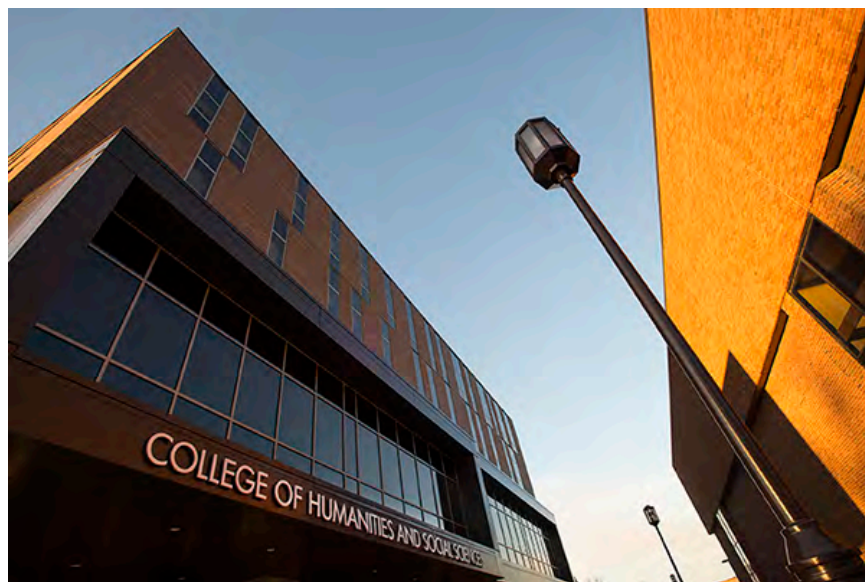
Webmaster: Alex Hagood

Not Pictured:

Historian: Meghan Hurley

Public Relations Officer: Shane Sedlemyer

**The New Home of the English Department:
Humanities and Social Science Building**



Welcome New Students!

The following students have been admitted to the graduate program since Spring 2015:

Ph.D./Literature & Criticism:

Najwa Ahmed, Asma Alamerou, Abdallah Aljdaitawi, Abigail Hennon, Sarah Horne, Maisar Khattab, Jinhyung Kim, Bradley Markle, Sarah Poeppel, Samantha Rump, Carl Sell, Zeeshan Siddique, Derek Smeltzer, Nada Tayem, Zainab Younus, Kalyn Zamierowski

M.A./Literature and Composition & Literature:

Fnu Aldyansyah, Areej Alenezi, Abeer Alharbi, Kevin Belknap, Andrew Davidson, Kelley Endres, Jordan Gorsuch, Michael Hartman, Cassandra Hay, Sean Helman, Stephanie Hilliard, Meshal Ibrahim, Vindi Kaldina Elle King, Wirda Ningsih, Lee Salem, Kawita Sarwari, Sousan Shashani, Olivia Woerle

Congratulations Graduates!

The following students successfully graduated in December 2015, May 2016, & August 2016:

Ph.D./Literature & Criticism:

Matthew Peter Ayres, Ibrahim Azizi, Michelle Banks, Brad Baumgartner, Amanda M. Benigni, Maria Bodenschatz, Claire Louise Englehart, Dominique Louisa Ficalora, David Johnson, Jean-Paul Konda, Shana Marie Kraynak, Sandra M. Leonard, Amanda Lagoe, Xiaodong Liu, Lana N. Lockhart, Kittiphong Prapham, Jessica M. Showalter, Tess Rebecca Stockslager, Tino G. Wilfong

M.A./Literature:

Alwaled Dafer Alshehri, Nourah Alsubaie, Jayna Elizabeth Doult, Lori Donell Eby, Benjamin David Fisher, Abigail A. Green, Emi Karimata, Elsa Ruth Klingensmith, Derek Smeltzer

M.A./ Composition and Literature:

Nouf Mfdhi Almroani, Julia C. Antolik, Samira Vijakumar Gaikwad, Nancy Elizabeth Raftery



Dates to Remember

LATE FALL 2016

Last Day of Fall classes: Dec. 12
 Final Exams: Dec. 13-16
 Commencement: Dec. 17

SPRING 2017

Candidacy Exam: January 19-20, 2017
 Classes Begin: January 23, 2017
 May graduation applications due to the SGSR: May 1
 Spring Recess: March 13-18
 Summer/Fall Registration: TBA
 Draft of Thesis/Dissertation due for format review: Apr. 1
 Electronic copies of Thesis/Dissertation due: April 15
 Last day of Spring classes: May 5
 Final Exams: May 8-11
 Commencement: May 13

FUTURE DATES FOR PLANNING

Early Summer Session Classes Begin: May 15, 2017
 Early Summer Session Classes End: June 2
 Candidacy Exam: June 1-2
 Summer Session 1 Classes Begin: June 5
 Summer Session 1 Classes End: July 7
 Summer Session 2 Classes Begin: July 10
 Summer Session 2 Classes End: Aug. 10
 Candidacy Exam: Aug. 24-25
 Fall 2017 classes begin: Aug. 28



Fall 2016 Cohort. Back row: Abdallah Aljdaitawi, Zeeshan Siddique, Sarah Horne, Maisar Khattab, Zainab Younus, Carl Sell, Bradley Markle **Middle row:** Jinhyung Kim, Najwa Ahmed, Kalyn Zamierowski, Samantha Rump, Sarah Poeppel, Abigail Hennon, Asma Alameroo **Front row:** Nada Tayem

Not Pictured: Derek Smeltzer



Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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