

Literature & Criticism

FROM THE DIRECTOR:



This year has been, and continues to be, one of transitions. Over the last three months I have had the pleasure of beginning my tenure as program director. In that time I have learned about the L&C program and our students in a dramatically different way. As I have become familiar with many of the systems and processes established by Dr. Downing during his nine years at the helm of the program, I have been repeatedly impressed by his stewardship of our program and care for members of our intellectual community. He has set the bar high and provided a great model for me.

As I step into this new position, I have been meeting with students, faculty, and organizational leaders to hear a variety of perspectives about who we are as a program and how we can better respond to the challenges facing us, both as a program at IUP and as part of the larger sector of humanities professionals. While most are excited about their study and research, many are anxious about the tight job market. Others are curious about job possibilities outside of the academy. That's why I was so thrilled to learn that the Modern Language Association has recently launched a series called Connected Academics, designed to help doctoral students envision careers both in *and outside* of the academy. It is important that the L&C program begin to connect with efforts

such as this so that we are better equipped to help students identify a variety of rewarding career paths that they may choose to pursue. For I sincerely believe that far from leaving one feeling desperate or underprepared, doctoral study in literature and criticism should leave one with a sense that every door is open, both personally and professionally.

Becoming more adept at preparing students for a broader range of career opportunities will take some time to actualize. Other transitions, however, do not require as much effort. For instance, in October I held the fall Candidacy Exam Workshop in a Zoom networked classroom, enabling participants to join the interactive workshop remotely if they were not on campus. This small change will help us to meet a long-standing desire to better connect with our Summers-Only students as well international and other students who have completed coursework and are no longer local to IUP. I hope to continue to use such technological tools to deliver all of the workshops that cover core elements of our program to better engage students as they continue their progress to degree.

We also took another step toward strengthening communication by launching the *IUP Literature & Criticism* page on Facebook. While we're still early on, we envision it as a space where alumni, students, current and retired faculty can connect (and reconnect) to "catch up" with each other, celebrate our successes, network and share professional opportunities, and do some collective thinking about issues facing us as literature/humanities professionals. The transition to using social media to improve our ability to network is an easy one, but it is only as good as our ability to loop in alumni we have perhaps lost track of. So if you are a L&C "Lit Critter" (thanks to Jim Cahalan for that one!), join the *IUP Literature & Criticism* Facebook page, and be sure to invite alumni who may not be there yet.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention another significant transition that will occur in our program at end of 2017: the retirement of long-time faculty member, Dr. Gail Berlin. Dr. Berlin, a medievalist and Holocaust literature specialist, has been employed at IUP since

1985. Many of you knew her through the Old English course you took to fulfill your foreign language requirement. She also served as department chair for nine years. I'm sure all of you will join me thanking her for her many years of tireless service to the program and English Department, and in wishing her well.

As we all continue to reflect on and engage with the Literature & Criticism program, I look forward to the lively conversations and dialogues that will transition us into the future.



Veronica T. Watson, PhD

IN THIS ISSUE:

- From the Director (Cover Piece)
- Conversations: Mike Sell and Alexander Hagood
- Faculty News!
- In Her Words: Gail Berlin
- An Interview with Dr. David Downing, by Abigail Hennon
- Celebrating the Public Humanities: Dr. Todd Thompson Commemorates the Thoreau Bicentennial, by Wesley Scott McMasters
- Banned Books Week 2017: Expand Our Worldview
- EGO: A Letter from the President
- Meet Our MA Students!
- Student and Alumni News!
- Congratulations Graduates! Thesis and Dissertation Titles
- Dates to Remember
- New PhD Students, Fall 2017

Literature & Criticism Website: <http://www.iup.edu/english/grad/literature-criticism-phd/>
Registration Web Address: <http://www.iup.edu/myiup/>
Graduate Literature E-mail Address: iup-gradliterature@iup.edu
Graduate Literature Telephone: (724) 357-2263
IUP Academic Calendar: <http://www.iup.edu/news-events/calendar/>

Newsletter Editors

Abigail Hennon
a.e.hennon@iup.edu

Alexander Hagood
a.j.hagood@iup.edu

Faculty Advisor:
Veronica Watson
veronica.watson@iup.edu

CONVERSATIONS: MIKE SELL & ALEXANDER HAGOOD

I sat down to talk with Dr. Mike Sell, a Professor of English who has recently made a career shift. Since he was a graduate student, Dr. Sell has worked in the fields of the Avant-Garde, the Black Arts Movement, Performance Theory, and Critical Theory. But in 2015, Dr. Sell started teaching a course in a developing field of study: video games, and particularly video games as literature.

We started by addressing what it is that video games studies actually *is*. According to Dr. Sell, video games studies is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses communications media, digital literacy and English, theatre and performativity, and graphic design. With such an interdisciplinary field, I had to ask how Dr. Sell sees video games as connected to literature and literary studies, and what it is that we English scholars bring to that conversation. His response was that, when looking at video games as literature, we as scholars use both the intrinsic interdisciplinarity of our field and our unique ability to critically analyze texts to look at video games. Video game designers, he explains, “are attempting something in this medium that is comparable to what has been done with film, what has been done with novels, what has been done with drama, what has been done with short fiction, what has been done with poetry. There’s a quality to these games that deserves special attention, an emphasis on the aesthetic. There are representations, there are stories, there are characters in games compelling in the same fashion as in other media and genres.” He then went on to explain that English studies offers insight into the medium regardless of whether we find a particular game to have any “literary” quality. In the same way that knowing how to read a complex poem empowers us to critically respond to a newspaper article, knowing how to play, say, a video game that queers its fiction and its mechanics empowers us to critically respond to the gamified mechanisms of social media.



With all of this discussion about video games as literature and as part of the field of English studies, we paused for a moment to make sure that we were clear what exactly we meant when we were talking about video games. Most people, I acknowledged, think of video games as console games such as *Call of Duty*, *Bioshock*, or massively multiplayer online roleplaying games (MMORPG) such as *World of Warcraft* or *Destiny 2*. We acknowledged the fun and significance of these games (Dr. Sell is currently playing the first-person shooter *Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus*), but chose to focus our attention on independent games, especially those that challenged conventional understandings of gender and sexuality. One of the games that Dr. Sell talked about was *With Those We Love Alive*, saying that it’s “a compelling work of queer fiction in which we, as players, try to find stability in a world of horrific beauty, in which we struggle to find a place for ourselves as artists, to reconnect with a lost lover, as we try to maintain our composure and our sanity in a world that’s trying to deny all of that.”

This led us to talk about the function of video games in society and the fact that, currently in the United States, video games are generally viewed as simply entertainment. No doubt, many games are simply entertaining, and that’s fine to Dr. Sell. But the games he loves best are both entertaining and aesthetically compelling. One game that we kept coming back to is *Gone Home* by Steve Gaynor. *Gone Home* puts you in the role of a young woman who has just come home from a European vacation, her first time coming to a new house her family has moved into, and she finds a note on the door from her sister telling her not to “dig into what happened.” As we play the game, we discover that our sister is queer, that she has rebelled against our conservative family and the conservative culture of 1990s America. *Gone Home* is a mystery, a puzzle, and a moving story of a young woman embracing her sexuality.

At this point in the conversation, we started to address the skills that students bring to the video games as literature classroom and how those skills relate to those that students already use when studying more classical

forms of literature, such as the novel or the poem. One observation that Dr. Sell made was that his students, when facing literature and feeling confused or finding five different possible meanings of a symbol, “almost always consider it a moment where they’re not good enough, they’re not skilled enough; they’re failing at it.” Yet when those same students will experience a moment of failure in a video game as “an invitation to keep trying. That’s what you do when you play a video game. You just keep trying. We don’t quit.” And even further, he said, the “people who play video games are often highly cultured: they read, they watch movies, they write a lot, they talk a lot, and they tend to be very opinionated and knowledgeable about the video games they love.” These people develop an intense community around their favorite video games, be it in the development of online walkthroughs, forums to talk about the games. “I only wish I could find such passion among students for literature.”

This led to the discussion of live streamers: game players who not only play video games, but also play them so that an online audience can watch them play and listen to their commentary as they play the game. And we agreed that these live streamers have high-level cognition occurring, because live streamers are “playing the game, they’re narrating their experience of it, they’re playing it and succeeding in these very challenging sort of video game moments, they’re busy reading this chat and with the kind of utmost wit responding to it. And then when we think about female streamers who are not only doing all that, but then negotiating that very complex, problematic space of gender and sexuality in video games.” All of this we tied back to English studies and the position of video games in literature courses because these streamers, and many other video game players, demonstrate a high level of literacy through their ability to process so many different, moving parts at the same time and succeed at each of them. They recognize, they read, and they respond to what they are reading through both their responses to a live chat and their ability to narrate the events of the game *and* their thoughts and reactions as they play through these games.

This got me curious about the types of literacy that gamers use when they are actually playing video games and how that can translate to the English classroom. To illustrate the point, Dr. Sell returned to our previous example of *Gone Home* and the game’s first puzzle: unlocking the front door of the house. “I’ve played video games forever, and when I encounter that puzzle, I do two things I hardly even think about. I’ve pressed the

right buttons to move me forward, I’ve recognized the information on the screen telling me the door is locked, and that information, tells me that either there’s another way to get in or the door can be unlocked. To solve the puzzle—to recognize that it is a puzzle—you have to be able to utilize about five different basic video game skills.” What we found most interesting here was not only the kinds of literacy that games must have, but “the contradiction between the idea of video games as being accessible, as distributing intellectual authority in a very democratic way, versus the idea that video games are still, in some ways, a specialized and even exclusionary media.”



From left to right: Alexander Hagood, Sean Helman, and Barbara Shultz present research for Dr. Mike Sell’s “Video Games and Literature” class (Nov. 2017).

When I agreed with him and further explained the contradiction, talking about navigating the contradiction of video games as an accessible medium for everyone versus being a specialized and complex medium that requires specific literacy in order to most effectively explore, Dr. Sell brought us back to the idea of video games as a form of literature, saying “that what we just described, if we were to remove the term ‘video game’ from it, is the same basic contradiction in English Studies. When I think about Humanities Literature, for example, when I think about idealistic understanding of literature as being fundamental to community, to citizenship, to being human, I think we’re stuck in a similar kind of contradiction: The most important works of literature, in my life, have been the things that I was only able to truly discover once I had lived with literature for a long time. The most human experiences I have had

required me to acquire skills that no human being is born with.”

With so much time spent on the nature of video games as a form of literature, I had to touch on what inspired Dr. Sell to make such a major career shift. With his publications and well established reputation within the field of modern world drama, avant-garde studies, and the Black Arts Movement, what led to his decision to pursue video games studies? To start, he said that he really wanted to experience the fear of not being the person in the classroom who knew the most about a subject. “I want to experience the thrill of starting from the start.” Video games had been part of his life for as long as he could remember. He thought about why he loved video games and he found that, “in fact, the literature and the theory that I love the most, that I’m most passionate about, forces us to be active, to participate. Drama is staged. Avant-garde literature often requires us to actively considering who we are, what we are, and what we’re doing as we read. And I do performance theory, so that’s all very playful, participatory literature.” He realized that his literary interests had always been about playing within systems.

Finally, I asked Dr. Sell if he had any advice for someone who wants to explore video games, or another field that is less acknowledged and respected in the field at the present time. On this, Dr. Sell had plenty to say.

“I would say to begin with that you should do exactly what you want to do. Follow your passion. Don’t think that the things that you love can’t be serious objects of scholarship. The most interesting scholars take risks. On the other hand, you need to mitigate that risk, because it’s one thing to say you’re going take a risk, but it’s another thing to actually encounter that risk. And that decision is very different for a Full Professor than it is for a doctoral student putting their comprehensive lists together. I took that kind of risk when I was a graduate student, choosing to write about the avant-garde, the Black Arts Movement, and performance studies. The advice my mentor Enoch Brater gave me was if I was going to study this material, if I was going to stake my career on fields that were little known or often disparaged, I needed to make sure I was an expert in the things that people recognize, for good and bad reasons, as valid fields of study. What got me the job was knowing how the new fit with the old; was knowing how to explain why the risk I was taking was a risk that English Studies needed to take; was knowing how to

connect the risky, the experimental, and the emergent with the tried and true. Finding opportunity and taking risk is always, always rewarding, but understanding how to make the new comprehensible to people who might not understand it is where the labor of changing a field begins.”

Alexander Hagood

FACULTY NEWS!

Dr. David Downing published his invited essay, “Higher Education and the Crisis of Care,” in a special issue, “Saving the Humanities,” of the international online journal, *Humanities*. His entry for “Capitalism” has been accepted for publication in the forthcoming (2018) *Broadview Encyclopedia of Critical Terms*. Downing will be reading his paper, “Capitalist Production and Social Reproduction in *The Higher Learning in America* in a special session on “Thorstein Veblen’s *The Higher Learning in America* at One Hundred” at the MLA Convention in New York City, January, 2018. This year’s volume of *Works and Days, Three Days in October: APSCUF Strong*, was devoted to last fall’s faculty strike. This volume offers a unique historical overview of the events leading up to, during, and after the strike. Many IUP students and faculty contributed to the volume (as well as faculty from other PASSHE campuses), including essays by the guest editors of the volume and ASCUF leaders: David Chambers, Erika Frenzel, Nadene L’Amoreaux, Jamie Martin, and Rob Mutchnick. The volume includes many photos and an extended photo essay, as well as a chronological sequence of the APSCUF Press Releases documenting the stages of the strike. Contributors from the English Department include: Brian Carpenter, Reena Dube, Peter Faziani, Abigail Hennon, Wes McMasters, Katrina Miller, Gian Pagnucci, Mary Stewart, Matthew Stumpf, Todd Thompson, Kaitlin Tonti, Matthew Vetter, and Henry Yukevich. Abigail Hennon and Matthew Stumpf served as Editorial Assistants.

Dr. Melanie Holm began the year presenting two papers at the annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) in Minneapolis, MI. The first paper she presented, “Teaching *The Rape of the Lock* in a Climate of Campus Rape,” explored how our teaching of canonical texts can be enriched by alertness to the associative experiences and contemporary debates concerning our college student population. The second paper, “Margaret Cavendish and

the Theory of Everything,” drew on the intersections of early modern scientific and aesthetic theory in the work of the first female member of England’s Royal Society, Margaret Cavendish. A broader exploration of these relationships appeared shortly after in print, in the article, “The Happy Creator: Pleasure and Paratext in Margaret Cavendish’s *Blazing Worlds*,” published in *Restoration*. A second article also appeared in *Aphra Behn Online*, “Taking the Marriage Plot Online: Eighteenth-Century Gender Play and the Digital Native.”

Holm has since returned her attention to reviewing books for *The Scriblerian* and *Kit-Kats*, and has taken on the role of Managing Editor for this journal. She looks forward to presenting on her pedagogical concerns—the digital humanities at the Annual Meeting of the Aphra Behn and Frances Burney Societies; and the pedagogy of close-reading at the annual meeting of the North-Eastern Modern Language Association—in the next few months, and eagerly awaits the publication of her co-edited volume, *Mockingbird Technologies: Essays on the Comparative and Global Poetics of Bird Mimicry* (Fordham University Press).

Dr. Mike Sell recently put the final touches on his contribution to the eight-volume *Decades of Modern American Drama: Playwriting from the 1930s to 2009* (Methuen). For the 1960s volume, he wrote two essays—the first a comprehensive survey of theater, the second a historical overview of everyday life and culture in that tumultuous decade—and edited original essays on Edward Albee, Amiri Baraka, Jean-Claude van Itallie, and Adrienne Kennedy. Doctoral student Bradley Markle assisted with source documentation and compiled a suite of primary documents that appear in that same volume.

Sell’s essay “Calling Poppa Stoppa: Larry Neal’s Ghosts” is forthcoming in *Don’t Say Goodbye to the Porkpie Hat: The Larry Neal Critical Reader* (University of Illinois). “Playing the Avant-Garde: The Aesthetics, Narratives, and Communities of Video Game Vanguards” will appear in a special issue of *Modernism/Modernity* on the subject of “Avatars of Modernism.”

In November, he co-chairs a seminar at the American Society for Theatre Research conference. “Playing the Extra/Ordinary: Video Games and Difference” follows up on last year’s seminar, whose participants deployed transmedial analysis to ascertain the theatrical and performative dimensions of video games and gaming.

He continues to work on his next book, tentatively titled *The Script and the Scream: Text and Performance in the Black Arts Movement*. He is writing an essay on the representation of video games in fiction, film, comics, and television; several reference articles for the *Encyclopedia of the Black Arts Movement* (Rowman & Littlefield); and, in collaboration with Cindy Rosenthal of Hofstra University, an essay on the life, writings, and creative works of the pioneering performance studies scholar Richard Schechner, which will appear in the eight-volume *Great North American Theatre Directors* reference series (Methuen). Finally, with La Donna Forsgren of Miami University, Ohio, Sell is developing an anthology of Black Arts Movement plays by women.

He is an active member of the Twitter community and invites you to follow him @mike_sell.

Dr. Tom Slater submitted his manuscript for *Silent Screen Writer June Mathis: Her Triumphs, Struggles, and Importance Today* to Wayne State University Press at the beginning of August. He is awaiting feedback from the reviewers and editorial board.

In 1999, Slater founded the Center for Film Studies to promote film studies at IUP. They sponsor a film series, host campus visits by producers, screenwriters, actors, and scholars, and have offered a regional writing contest and an international filmmaking competition. This year, the Center for Film Studies has worked with the Pop Culture Methodologies group and Dr. Rosalee Stillwell and the Rotten Potatoes Film Club to extend the reach of the English Department Film Series. Further support has come from the Office for International Education and IUP United Against Islamophobia. Hundreds of students have enjoyed the movies and discussions.

In Spring 2017, **Dr. Todd Thompson** and L&C PhD candidate Kaitlin Tonti co-authored an essay, “American Literature Time Machine: Toward a Democratic Canon in the Undergraduate Survey Course,” that appeared in *Teaching American Literature: A Journal of Theory and Practice*. Thompson and Tonti also won the 2017 IUP Center for Teaching Excellence Content Pedagogy Award. Additionally, Thompson was winner of the 2017 IUP Distinguished Faculty Award for Research. He presented two conference papers in spring 2017: “Time Travel and Collaborative Canon-making in the American Literature Survey” at the Northeast Modern Language Association conference in Baltimore in March and “[A]miable...epicures’: Jokes on Cannibalism in 19th-Century Travel Writing” at the American Literature

Association conference in Boston in May. In summer 2017, Thompson spent a month-long residency at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, MA as a Peterson Fellow. He has also recently become Treasurer/Secretary of the American Humor Studies Association.

Dr. Veronica Watson was recently elected as Director of the Literature & Criticism program. Her term of service began in August 14, 2017. As she stepped into this new administrative role, she wrapped up her spring 2017 sabbatical by traveling to Madrid, Spain in June 2017 to continue research on the African American expatriate author, Frank Yerby, and has been granted permission from the family to publish a collection of short stories from the Frank Yerby archive held at Boston University. With the help of Graduate Assistants Lisa Mazey, Nedrick Patrick and Alexander Haygood, she is transcribing stories that may be included in the volume and conducting research to discover their production and publication histories. She is also editing a collection tentatively entitled *Feminists Engage the Movement for Black Lives*.

Watson was keynote speaker at the Frederick Douglass Interdisciplinary Conference held at East Stroudsburg University in April 2017 and presented “Black Crime Fiction in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter” at the Captivating Criminality 4 conference held at Bath Spa University in Corsham, U.K. in June 2017. She has recently accepted an invitation to serve on the editorial board of *The International Journal of Critical Diversity Studies*, published by The Wits Centre for Diversity Studies at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. Watson has also received two external grants in the last year: a two-year, \$101,000 extension on the operation grant from Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education for the statewide Frederick Douglass Institute Collaborative, and a \$5000 grant from the Stackpole-Hall Foundation to support a number of initiatives through the Frederick Douglass Institute for Intercultural Research at IUP.

Dr. Lingyan Yang has been granted an extension to her sabbatical leave so that she will have the whole academic year (Fall 2017–Spring 2018) to work on her book, *Asian American and Asian Diasporic Aesthetics and Form*. Her article, “Teaching Asian American and Asian Diasporic Women’s Literature in the Undergraduate English B.A. Curriculum,” has been accepted for publication and is forthcoming in the journal, *Pennsylvania English*.

IN HER WORDS: GAIL BERLIN

Dr. Gail Berlin, a well-respected professor at IUP for 32 years, specializing in Old and Middle English Language and Literature, Medieval Women, and Holocaust Literature, is retiring in December 2017. Please join us in thanking her for her service, congratulating her on her retirement, and wishing her well in her future endeavors.



What are two or three of your favorite books? Or can you recommend books that you feel every graduate student should read?

Gail Berlin: I can’t imagine two or three books every graduate student should read. Read what moves you. This week, I am moved by Ocean Vuong’s amazing book of poetry, *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*. Vuong is a twenty-something gay immigrant from Vietnam, and already a stunning, ancient, and wise voice. In Holocaust literature, read poetry by Paul Celan and Nelly Sachs. Also read Charlotte Delbo’s shattering memoir, *None of Us Will Return*, written somewhere between prose and poetry. These all need to be taught so they don’t get lost. My favorite poet is Federico Garcia Lorca, and there is a new edition of his poems out, *Poet in Spain*, translated by Sarah Arvio. But don’t miss Mary Rueffle’s *A Little White Shadow*, an erasure poem where I learned that “It was my duty to keep the piano filled with roses.” In the Middle Ages, I plan to keep reading Hildegard of Bingen, who once wrote to a young monk, “You are about to

undertake the adventure of the unicorn.” If you are not familiar with Hildegard, start with the recording of her music, *A Feather on the Breath of God*. Then try her visions or poetry or *Lingua Ignota* (Unknown Language) or texts for exorcism. To relax, I look at the photographs of trees by Beth Moon. And I am drawn to Mihaela Noroc’s photographs in *The Atlas of Beauty: Women of the World in 500 Portraits*. Because I am doing research on ditches as symbol and technology in the Middle Ages, I have read Graham Robb’s *The Ancient Paths: Discovering the Lost Map of Celtic Europe*, and have fallen in love with what he has to say about the defunct Gaulish language. (Ask me about the word for “virgin.”) And I am awaiting my copy of *Landmarks* by British author Robert MacFarlane, a man with much to say about both nature and language. From MacFarlane, I have learned that *èit* refers to “the practice of placing quartz stones in streams so that they sparkle in moonlight and thereby attract salmon to them in the late summer and autumn.”

Finally, here are some works I think all graduate students should read and teach: Timothy Snyder’s compact and terrifying book *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*; George Orwell’s essay “Politics and the English Language;” and Plato’s Allegory of the Cave.

What was your most memorable moment in the classroom?

GB: Maybe the moment when I sang lullabies in Middle English and Yiddish to my overwrought Honors College freshmen to calm them. The moment in our Holocaust Lit class this semester when we hit a word in Nelly Sachs that no one could agree on. In my graduate class on poetry last summer, while reading Neruda’s *Book of Questions*, we responded to the line, “How do the oranges divide up/ sunlight in the orange tree?” by taking the question seriously, pretending to be oranges together, and discussing the matter. I can still see the sunlight through my rind. And I’m still laughing. Or the moment in my class on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, when we pondered how *exactly* did Gawain and Bertilak exchange those kisses. (Cheek peck? A-frame?)



What will you miss the most?

GB: Laughing with colleagues. Having coffee with my graduate students at the Café Amadeus (although I don’t plan to stop doing this). Having books in the library, a notion now, apparently, considered medieval. (Did you know that in the Middle Ages there were chained libraries? We could bring back the practice and chain the books that are left.)

What are your retirement plans?

GB: First, several weeks of sleep. Then visits to friends, a silent retreat, travel to England or Scotland (maybe I can see an *èit*), long mornings writing poetry, and of course, finishing my article on medieval ditches which I will be presenting at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo this spring for the panel on Lazamon’s *Brut*.

Do you have any advice for future students?

GB: Don’t try to plan it all. Welcome whatever befalls and see where it leads.



AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. DAVID DOWNING

BY: ABIGAIL HENNON



Abigail Hennon talks to Dr. David Downing about his nine years of experience as Director of Graduate Studies in Literature and Criticism and as editor of the academic journal, Works & Days. The interview took place almost a year to the day after the 2016 APSCUF strike and also after the publication of the 35th volume of Works & Days, a special issue of the

journal that focuses on the strike. Works and Days: Three Days in October, APSCUF Strong, guest edited by APSCUF leaders, David Chambers, Erika Frenzel, Nadene L'Amoreaux, Jamie Martin, and Robert Mutchnick, contains works by both faculty and students. As a historical document, it stands as an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the future of higher education.

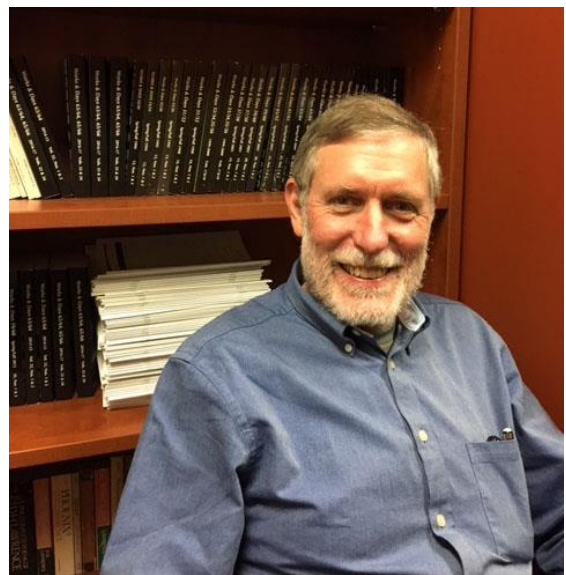
Abigail Hennon: *Dr. Downing, you have had a well-established career, editing Works & Days for 37 years and publishing extensively. The first two issues of W&D, in the spring 1979 and spring 1980, were published at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and beginning in 1984 at Eastern Illinois University. Can you tell me a little more about how W&D began?*

David Downing: First, thank you for the compliments. I certainly agree that I'm hanging on at the tail end of this career, but let's begin with *W&D*. I left SUNY Buffalo in 1979 for my first job at Eastern Illinois University, so I was only indirectly involved with the two SUNY-based experimental issues. The spark for the whole project was actually an incredible interdisciplinary symposium on the arts and the university at SUNY that included artists and writers such as John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Robert Creeley, Leslie Fiedler, etc. These (and many other) participants contributed to that first issue. Provocatively, the title was stolen from Hesiod, mainly because Hesiod's "Works and Days" was an 800-line poem from 7th-century BCE Greece when poetry was so unabashedly related to economic and political activities. The narrator of the poem is speaking to his younger brother about the farm they've inherited from their father. The poem basically serves as an instruction manual on how best to operate the farm and negotiate

the relations with the sometimes unethical local lords or "basilees." Clearly, these connections between history and literature were wedded in the mostly oral tradition of poetic performance in ancient Greece. So the parallel: the journal began right around 1980 when Stephen Greenblatt coined the term New Historicism, as many humanists were reclaiming the social, historical, and political dimensions of literature and the arts. I became editor in 1984 after the initial grad student editorial collective had dispersed. When I took over, I applied to the Library of Congress for an official ISSN number, and, of course, I got it because the sub-title then, (*Essays in the Sociohistorical Dimensions of Literature and the Arts*) meant that the full title was technically not plagiarized from Hesiod. But after about ten years, I just dropped the sub-title, and the plagiarism was successful! Of course, I shouldn't gloat, because the person I'm pilfering from has been dead for 2600 years! But in our field, you have to take what you can get.

AH: *What has been the most rewarding part about editing W&D?*

DD: Good question. It is a lot of work, but there's a collaborative dimension that connects you on a daily basis to the networks of the profession in ways that one's individual scholarly work does not. There are fifty editorial advisory board members and many contributors to each volume; everyone is always struggling to catch the drift of what's going on in the profession in relation to what's happening in the world. We try to listen to each other. For me, it is like an ongoing support network for those of us concerned with social justice issues.



AH: *Have there been any W&D issues that have stood out to you throughout these years?*

DD: Well, as you know from the strike volume that you contributed to, you get pretty committed to every project. So it's hard to pick just a few. But let me give you a few examples.

One issue that meant a great deal to me was precipitated by the sudden death of a friend, Jim Berlin. Berlin was a well-known figure in composition and cultural studies. He had written the forward to a book I'd just edited called *Changing Classroom Practices* (NCTE, 1994). About a month before the book was in print, I got a phone call from a friend telling me that Jim had just suffered a massive heart attack while he was out jogging. He was only 54 years old. Took my breath away. Many friends and colleagues of Jim were, of course, distressed, so we ended up creating an innovative retrospective volume, *Cultural Studies and Composition: Conversations in Honor of James Berlin*. It was a very heart-felt issue, and the amazing thing was that, NCTE decided to market and sell the book at the 4C's national convention. We printed 1500 copies, and they sold out almost instantly.

The 2003 issue, *Information University: Rise of the Education Management Organization*, focuses on the work of Marc Bousquet. Marc later revised and expanded this work into his book, *How the University Works* (NYU Press, 2008), which became widely influential (and Mark became a good friend in the process).

Another personally important volume for me was *Richard Ohmann: A Retrospective* (2005). From my perspective, Dick had been a friend (and early *W&D* supporter) whose work had been deeply influential for me and others for more than thirty years, so it was a real rewarding experience to me. Also, NCTE allowed us to have a *Works and Days* reception honoring Dick at the 4Cs, and it was attended by about 130 people.

And then, of course, *Academic Freedom and Intellectual Activism in the Post-9/11 University*, a huge double volume had a real impact. It later became a much-edited book published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2010 (co-edited with

Ed Carvalho, who had been my editorial assistant). It included work by Ward Churchill, Noam Chomsky, Gayatri Spivak, Cornel West, many very well-known people. That issue made a splash. It was picked up and twice written about by Stanley Fish in the *NY Times* online.

AH: *How did you find yourself at IUP?*

DD: The brief story was that in 1988, I wasn't looking all that much for a job, but a friend brought my attention to this opening at IUP for a critical theorist concerned with pedagogy—so I applied. I got an interview, ended up coming to campus, and it was quite wonderful. It was the year that the new program was going into effect, and they were putting the courses 955 and 956 (exactly my areas) right at the core of the program. It was kind of a dream job for me, so I was very lucky to come to IUP.

AH: *So, you came to IUP at the beginning of the L&C program, serving as a faculty member, but later as the Director of Graduate Studies in Literature and Criticism.*

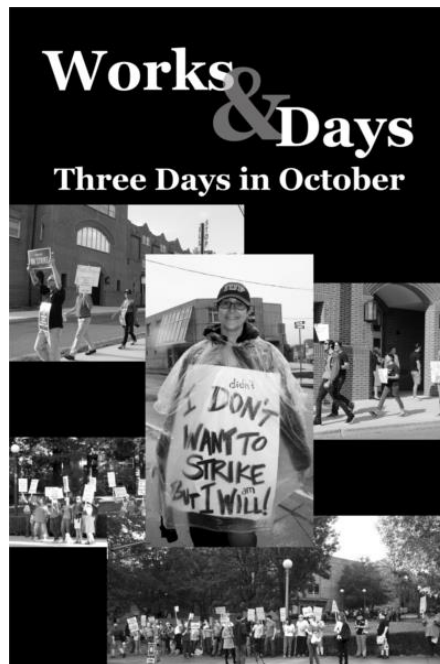
DD: I became Director in 2008, and you know what happened in 2008: the global economic melt-down. There were challenges that everybody in higher education faced. Particularly, funding for higher education further eroded. The previous director, Karen Dandurand, had been challenged to grow the program, and had done so very successfully, so that our entering cohorts in 2206-08 were like 22–25,

instead of 15. We thought we were continuing in this "full court press," as the administration called it. We had 17 L&C faculty members then. Now we have 14.

AH: *Like the support web you formed as an editor of W&D, there is a supportive web of IUP students and faculty. Is this what makes IUP special?*

DD: Yes, among many other things. I am proud of some of the things we have done, since we knew we weren't going to get any more money.

We deliberately focused even more on faculty and student needs. We've got a group of very devoted, committed faculty. It's a pleasure working with my



colleagues. And we've got a group of very devoted, committed students. It's a pleasure working with them. So all of us dedicated ourselves to invigorating our basic mission to train not just research-centered disciplinary scholars suited to R1 universities, but to develop the teacher-scholar model better suited to most of the real jobs that do open up in local and regional colleges and universities. That is our reputation. We combined the teacher-scholar focus with attention to the important theoretical work of the last forty years, and on the disciplinary shift from literary to cultural studies. Those three over-lapping characteristics are the distinctive features of our program. And we are well-equipped to carry out that mission.

A very concerted effort was then made to create a community of scholars, as Todd Thompson often calls it. At IUP we can have a different relationship with our graduate students than many of the R1 universities. Faculty at such institutions have far less motive to interact with their students—how many grad students at Harvard are going to become internationally famous—their only hope to improve Harvard's global reputation? But at IUP, the difference is: your success as students is *our* success. We created student-centered support, from support for student activities like the Red Flag poetry series to the PCM (Popular Culture Methodologies) group; from our mentoring program to Dr. Melanie Holm's professional workshops. In these times, you need a supportive network with rich and ongoing interaction between faculty and students. I think we have been pretty successful on that score.

Another ongoing aspect of our (two) programs is that we still have the only summer's-only residential doctoral program in English. This is not a minor matter. One of the things we were deliberately doing is responding to the needs of the growing cadre of part-time, temporary, adjunct faculty in the United States. Basically, they don't have to quit their jobs to go to graduate school to earn their PhDs. Of course, the summer's-only program is like an immersion program. It's exciting, but it is exhausting: at its best, the intensity is stimulating, but it sure can be tiring.

AH: *In English 955, the Theory class all L&C students take, you jokingly call yourself the Great Oppressor, but we all found you to be exceptionally fair and very reasonable. You were always very honest about our worries and fears. That class tackles difficult topics related to our profession, like the job market in academia, and challenges for women and people of color. You never sugar coat*

the truth. When students struggle with the idea that there are these problems, these issues, what do you tell them?

DD: First, you're right about the truth. You have to know the truth even when it is difficult to distinguish from endless fake news (how can you be certain that my role is not to oppress you all as an agent of the state?). But there's a kind of conundrum in critical work, or what many smart people from Plato on down have called the dialectic: critique and affirmation cannot be divorced from each other. The philosopher, Paul Ricour, called it the tension between the negative hermeneutics of suspicion and the positive hermeneutics of recovery (or what the, late, great queer theorist, Eve Sedgwick, called "reparative criticism"). On the one hand, you devoted yourself to this field so you can follow your bliss, but you also need to know the professional hoops so you can navigate these difficult times. Both are equally important: honor your own commitments to life as a teacher/scholar; and honor your investigations into the material conditions that make that life possible. I know that aspects of my course, 955, can be unrelentingly depressing, and sometimes the truth hurts, but our struggle to discern whatever might be the truth is the only basis for action. As I try to keep in sight in 955, it is a dialectic between appearance and reality, illusion and truth, injustice and justice—these ongoing tensions just will not evaporate into our postmodern or neoliberal mélange. I have been trying to cure my reputation for depressing students, including use of a new text, introduced to me by my colleague Katie Miller, called *The Slow Professor* by Barbara K. Seeber and Maggie Berg (University of Toronto Press, 2017). They offer some positive, helpful, life-sustaining suggestions, especially for anyone at the beginning of an academic career.

AH: *Have you any advice for the L&C students, past, present, and future?*

Again: follow your bliss but know how to navigate the field. As a graduate student that means many things: develop your professional identity in sync with your deepest desires and affiliate actively with those others already at work in the field; make wise, responsible decisions; know what the program calls for; know what your requirements are and how best to move them efficiently toward where you want to go; create solidarity, reciprocity, and mutual aid with your teachers and your peers at all stages of the program and in your future life as a teacher/scholar. We live interdependently, not independently. But once again, follow your bliss.

CELEBRATING THE PUBLIC HUMANITIES: DR. TODD THOMPSON COMMEMORATES THE THOREAU BICENTENNIAL

**BY:
WESLEY SCOTT McMASTERS**

As literature lovers and scholars, we are members of a broad sector of passionate professionals, those who contribute to the public humanities. The skills and credentials we pursue prepare us to contribute to the life-long learning and development of people in and outside of traditional classroom experiences. From library and museum to after-school and adult literacy programming, from modeling humanistic skills in civic debate to using those skills to rebuild fractured and struggling communities, those we serve benefit when we bring our knowledge and training to bear on contemporary issues. This column celebrates those in our program who are doing that important outreach in their careers or professional service!



**Dr. Todd Thompson presenting at the
IUP Six O'Clock Series.**

Thoreau turned 200 years old this past July 12th, and IUP's own Dr. Todd Thompson, Thoreau Bicentennial Ambassador, urged a young generation to "Simplify, simplify." Thompson presented at the IUP Six O'Clock Series on November 6th, a public lecture series open to students, employees, and community members in Indiana, Pennsylvania. Dr. Thompson's talk, entitled "Thoreau at 200: 21st-Century Lessons from a 19th-

Century Rebel," celebrated the philosopher from Concord, MA. Thompson began with focusing on the relevance and perseverance of Thoreau's seminal environmentalist text from 1854, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. Thompson connected Thoreau's *Walden* to a modern audience through adaptations of the work, including part of the video game *Fallout 4* and a graphic novel, demonstrating the persistence of Thoreau's aesthetic and how we can still enter into conversation with him in a very different era. Thompson let his "literature nerd" show (as he would call it) during the presentation when he slipped in a few slides from his recent wedding at Walden Pond, as well.

Thompson's focus shifted to Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, a text that college students from this generation might already feel some connection to. A rebel who influenced countless others like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi, Thoreau's philosophies of peaceful resistance, Thompson suggests, are what we might meditate on the most during times when politics seem to become more complicated by the day.

Thompson continued to draw attention to Thoreau's character- contemplative and quiet, yet one of the most rebellious writers of his time. To those who would wonder why Thoreau and his work are important 200 years later, it is perhaps this paradoxical characterization that appeals to so many. Or, maybe, as Thompson suggests, we find ourselves looking to him in an attempt to learn how "to live deliberately."

BANNED BOOKS WEEK 2017: EXPAND OUR WORLDVIEW

BY: SARAH POEPPPEL

Every year during the last week of September, the American Library Association (ALA) recognizes Banned Books week 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 participate in Banned Books Week by hosting various Read-Outs and other events centered around celebrating the most frequently banned during that year. For 2017's Banned Books Week, the ALA's chosen theme was "Words Have Power!" and it highlighted that reading banned and/or challenged books can expand our worldviews.



At IUP, Banned Books Week has become a beloved tradition since its 2012 origination in Dr. Tanya Heflin's undergraduate Novel class. This year, the annual Read-Out event, the Six O'Clock Series, and the Pop Culture Methodologies (PCM) event were all sponsored by the English Department in partnership with IUP Libraries, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the English Graduate Organization (EGO). The Six O'Clock Series featured the new Banned Books co-coordinator, Dr. Emily Wender, as she and her panelists discussed "The First Amendment in the Digital Age." The PCM panel, "Pop Culture and the Power of Words," featured graduate students Nick Katsiadis, Meghan Hurley, Olivia Maderer, Shane Sedlemyer, and Emily Rupp.

Driscoll, who often reads from Dav Pilkey's children's series *Captain Underpants*, set aside this humorous text to read a passage from Orhan Pamuk's essay "Freedom to Write." Another focal point of the Read-Out was excerpts read by Dean Yaw Asamoah and Dr. Gian Pagnucci from a lecture given by Neil Gaiman. In this lecture, Gaiman emphasizes the importance of reading as a tool that helps to place us within other worlds, and therefore, broadens our worldviews, demonstrating that words *do* have power. Although it is evident from national and local conversations that words have power both for good and for bad, the Banned Books Read-Out seeks to shower the audience with the power of words in order to spread discussions that will enrich and expand our worldviews.



MCs Matthew Stumpf and Sheila Farr

The Banned Books Read-Out was held in IUP's Stapleton Library. MCs Sheila Farr and Matthew Stumpf entertained the audience by introducing readers and offering insights into why some of the authors and their books have been challenged. Since 2016's Banned Books Read-Out, national and local conversations have given a new urgency to thinking and talking about "Free Speech" and the "First Amendment," making it a more contentious year to discuss issues related to these subjects. At this year's Read-Out, President Mike

Featured authors and texts included: Orhan Pamuk, Neil Gaiman, a passage read in Arabic and in English translation from *The Koran*, Leslie Marmon Silko, Maya Angelou, Henry David Thoreau, Anne Frank, George Orwell, and Ray Bradbury. Highlights from this year's event featured lively readings from faculty, staff, and special guests, including President Mike Driscoll, Mrs. Becky Driscoll, Dr. John Kilmarx, Dean Yaw Asamoah, Dr. Gian Pagnucci, Dr. Todd Thompson, Dr. Emily Wender, Dr. Theresa McDevitt, Ms. Carol Connell, and Mr. Ed Zimmerman, as well as from graduate and undergraduate students.

Look for more information about IUP's Banned Books Week on the English Department website: www.iup.edu/english/events/banned-books/



EGO: A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello all!

The fall semester is nearly behind us, and I hope that means you all have had a great year so far. First and foremost, thanks goes to all of you—students and faculty alike—who have supported the English Graduate Organization. Both the official Organization and our community of scholars (may that phrase never die, Dr. Thompson) are sources of connection and education because of your involvement and encouragement. Dr. Williamson, one of EGO’s advisors, is always telling his students to think and read in terms of plentitude, and our department is certainly plentiful with great minds and active colleagues. With these great strengths at hand, EGO’s purpose has always been to support personally, connect widely, and build professionally.

At the start of this semester, the officers agreed that our goals for this year would be to build connections between students—to share resources and be mutual supports—and to provide opportunities to be challenged professionally. Broadly, EGO is dedicated to supporting its members in their professional endeavors and personal development; specifically this year, our goals were designed to emphasize that our greatest resource for achieving either mission is our fellow colleagues.

Between our professors and classmates, we are not lacking in potential mentors, research partners, teaching role models, and supporters for all the challenges graduate school brings. It is easy to forget how rich our surroundings are, with ideas and experiences that can challenge and build us. We hope that EGO has helped bring that invaluable benefit to our attention.

To put this into practice, we began our fall semester with the annual Back-to-School potluck. Students from every year and department brought food and spent time connecting with old and new faces. Since then, we have had consistent social gatherings on the first Thursday of each month at different locations, including H.B.

Culpepper’s and Artist’s Hand. We hope the various locations give students opportunities to get to know the area and to build support for each other outside the classroom (and get some good coffee at the same time).

The only thing English students need more than coffee *might* be books, which we collect donations of and sell at our Annual Fall Book Sale. Although the sale is an annual staple of EGO’s fall calendar, it is more than just tradition. While our department embraces multiple forms of literature, books are our core. They fuel our program and represent the power of fictions and knowledge. We encourage students to prize our access to them, through events like Banned Books Week, which EGO volunteered at this year and last. To have the opportunity to give students access to more of that is our privilege. Pragmatically, funds from the sale go towards the spring conference EGO hosts. It also provides an affordable source of books for our students, both for pleasure-reading and the collection of Candidacy Exam texts.



Olivia Maderer at the Banned Books Read Out (2017).

Concerning Candidacy, EGO partnered with Dr. Watson this semester for an informational workshop to offer study advice about the exam. EGO organized a panel of graduate students who had all taken the exam in recent years. The panelists gave the do’s and don’ts for study tips, gave personal accounts and encouragement, and participated in a Q&A

session with the audience. Graduate degrees require no small feats of consistent hard work and various tests; EGO hopes to back up its mission to “support personally” by, most of all, pointing to the available expertise and knowledge in our faculty and fellow students, through workshops like this one.

Earlier, I had said that another part of EGO’s mission was to “connect widely.” To me, and by evidence of past years, that has far more to do with creating academic and professional avenues for students than just a social outlet (although grad students certainly do need the occasional forced-socializing!). EGO’s center is truly about providing its students resources and challenges, to make them strong and confident professionals. One means

through which EGO makes that happen is our annual, interdisciplinary conference. Last year's conference, which was held in partnership with Pop Culture Methodologies, drew in a diverse and interesting group of panelists, all presenting research related to the theme of the "Cultural Shifts." The keynote speaker was Professor Steven Sherrill, a creative writing instructor at Penn State Altoona and a well-established author of fiction novels and their transmedia counterparts, including music and paintings. He spoke about the history his works, as well as lessons he had gathered about creative writing and being a multimedia artist.

Looking ahead, our conference for this academic year is slated for February 24, 2018. The theme will be "Disruptions, Distortions, and Dystopias." Our hope with this theme—composed of strong, evocative concepts—is that it will bring in both expected topics (dystopian literature or social disruptions) and unconsidered approaches (new perspectives or artistic distortions). Along with typical panels, this year's conference is providing a new opportunity for students to have their work professionally recognized. One of our in-house journals—*Inspiring Pedagogical Connections*, which began in our Composition department—has asked for submissions from conference participants about their pedagogical scholarship. If selected, articles will be included in a future issue of the journal. Our department believes and supports the teacher-scholar model, and EGO seeks to reflect that in our central event of the year. We hope to see you all there, as presenters, volunteers, or audience members.

Like our conference topic, EGO aims to support students on both the "expected" PhD track—a career in research and teaching—and those who are seeking a less conventional path—to name a few, editors, administrators, and writers. Under the direction and vision of Dr. Veronica Watson, the Director of Graduate Studies in Literature and Criticism, EGO will be actively creating events and spaces to find information about multiple career paths that successfully stem from a PhD in English. Along with events that show many professional options, EGO will be hosting workshops in the spring semester that will focus on our scholarly values in the academy—specifically at IUP—such as why we value what we read and what ideological diversity looks like.

I would like to take the time to recognize two groups that have and continue to bolster students and their

scholarship in the department: Pop Culture Methodologies (PCM) and Red Flag Poetry. In just the first few months of this school year, PCM has held several events, including academic workshops and the Film Series with Drs. Slater and Stillwell. Their senate and members have dedicated enormous time and effort to providing spaces for students to explore new topics and present their research. Most importantly, they have provided a network of faculty and students to share resources, conference opportunities, and professional support for those interested in or actively researching everything and anything under the pop culture umbrella. Recently, they were approved as an official student group, and I cannot wait to see the new opportunities they will provide as they move forward. Red Flag Poetry is a treasured publication outlet on our campus. Year after year, they have continued to offer students the unique opportunity to publish their poetry and to connect with one another as developing artists. They host read-outs and give their writers access to publication opportunities both internally and beyond. Without both groups, our department would be far less colorful and would lack these amazing opportunities for students to learn with and from each other.

Along with the many groups and events surrounding us, EGO has a fantastic group of officers. If you have not met them already, I hope you will take the time to come to our events and connect names with faces, because they are each talented, dedicated individuals. Thank you to our Vice President, Alex Hagood, who has not only been integral in designing our conference for this year, but who also has spent extra hours outside of required meetings, planning ahead so EGO's events run smoothly. Thank you, also, to Zainab Younus, our Treasurer, who has been a flawless accountant and who has volunteered for every event this year. Another thank



you to Elle King, our Public Relations officer, who

always goes above and beyond with her service to find fun and helpful ways to connect the grad students to EGO. Thank you to our Social Events Coordinator, Nada Tayem, who has diligently contributed to planning and attending our events. Thank you to Kalie Zamierowski, EGO's Historian, who has documented our events and is always offering a helping hand. Many thanks to Lara Hauer, our Secretary, for organizing our meeting agendas and the book sale. And last but not least, thank you to Patrick Chambers, our Workshop Coordinator, for his thoughtfulness and care to plan out the workshops and professionalization opportunities that will help the grad student community best.

But we would not be have gotten so far, so well, without the mentorship and assistance of our colleagues and advisors. A big thank you to Carl Sell and Matt Stumpf, our President and Vice President from last year, whose excellent leadership and continued advice has given EGO—and me especially—a solid foundation to start from and consistent support. And while “thank you” is really too small a phrase, thank you so much to Dr. Melanie Holm and Dr. Mike Williamson, our advisors. Your guidance, direction, and positivity have been invaluable, and I think I speak for everyone when I say that we are lucky to have such dedicated and talented teachers and scholars as examples to follow.

Finally, for their support, I would like to thank those leading the English department, who tirelessly work to help groups like EGO support their members. Thank you Dr. Veronica Watson. Your advice to the officers at the start of the year was a great encouragement and a confidence-booster; we are grateful to learn from your experience and example. And finally, thank you to Dr. Downing, who recently stepped down from being Director, one of EGO's biggest advocates for many years.

If anyone is interested in more details about EGO, would like more information about the upcoming conference, or would like to become more involved in the EGO goings-on, please feel free to email me at o.d.maderer@iup.edu.

With the highest regards,

Olivia D. Maderer
President, English Graduate Organization



MEET OUR MA STUDENTS!

Kimberly Bressler's (Literature MA, 1st year) research interests include feminist literature, gothic literature, and linguistic approaches to literature. She recently submitted a proposal for the NeMLA conference to present one of Nadine Gordimer's novels. She aspires to be a professor within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education in order to give back to the system that has given everything to her.

Anne Betz's (Composition and Literature MA, 1st year) areas of interest include speculative fiction, mythology and folklore, popular culture, and video games studies.

Diana Forry (Composition and Literature MA, 1st year) is a former Air Force veteran. Her interests in the literary world include British Literature, African American studies, gender studies, and historical criticism. Currently, she has prepared an abstract for the NeMLA Convention based on Eileen Chang's "Jasmine Tea" and Henry David Hwang's "M. Butterfly" and their representations of female agency and gender identity within Asian and Western society. Outside of school, Diana likes to enjoy the outdoors with her pups and taking spontaneous road trips.

Lynn Haraldson (Composition and Literature MA, 3rd year) was previously a journalist and blogger. She chose this program because she wants to teach in a community college setting, and her ultimate goal is to teach in the prison system through the Pell Grant program. It is through teaching writing and literature at the Indiana County jail that Lynn developed a love of poetry, but she'll always have a soft spot for 19th-century novels and anything Sherman Alexie writes. She works with inmates at the State Correctional Institution at Pine Grove on a number of writing-related projects, particularly their bi-monthly newsletter, *The Grove*, which

she and a dedicated group of inmates launched in March 2017.

Erika Renee Hodges's (Literature MA, 1st year) areas of interest include women's literature, feminist criticism, and historical fiction. She currently has a submitted abstract for the Lehigh University conference on Intersectionality and Literature, where she's exploring the ways that Chinese author Eileen Chang challenges and redefines gender roles in her short stories. At the end of the day, she's just trying to be the person her dog thinks she is.

Elle King's (Composition and Literature, 2nd year) areas of interest include women's literature, feminist studies, and social justice. She submitted an abstract to the Lehigh University Social Justice conference, where she hopes to talk about ethics in popular culture depictions of prostitution. Elle is also the PR officer for EGO, and will be presenting a paper at the EGO conference.

Elizabeth Pedder (Literature MA, 1st year) has academic interests in 18th–19th Century Romanticism and Transcendence. She will be presenting “Emmanuel Levinas, The Face of the Other: Examining Its Affect on Women and Literature” at the NEMLA Conference. She also has a second abstract pending for the Lehigh University Conference, “Close Reading as Literary Pedagogy: Interacting with Text.”

She is currently writing two grant proposals for the National Endowment for the Humanities. The first grant offered is based upon Humanities Initiatives at Community Colleges. Her working title is “Developing and Integrating Humanities Studies Across Disciplines.” The second NEH grant is a Collaborative Research Grant and is tentatively titled, “Promoting Literacy with the Elderly in Long-Term Healthcare Facilities.

She participates in the Faculty Development Series offered by The Center for Teaching Excellence; the English Graduate Organization; and the Graduate Student Assembly.

Marquel Sherry (Literature MA, 2nd year) has been focusing on Graphic novels, Film, and Modernism. She will be writing her master's thesis on the similarities between Elizabeth Bowen and Eileen Chang's spy fiction. She hopes to continue on at IUP in the PhD program once finished with her master's degree.

Casey Szatkowski (Composition and Literature MA, 2nd year) is focusing mainly on pedagogical training as she begins seeking a position at a local community college. Her interests include sci/fi, fantasy, gothic, and historical fiction, and she hopes to write her own novel one day. She lives in Oakmont with her husband and her two dogs.

STUDENT & ALUMNI NEWS!

Eliza Albert (L&C, ABD) was hired in December, full time, as a writer/editor at Penn State in the Office of Development Communications. In the University's Division of Development and Alumni Relations, she researches and composes various writing-based projects, specifically gift proposals of \$5 million or higher (a unique role compared to other grant writers). Eliza enjoys her work immensely and finds that writing for philanthropy is very fulfilling, as it contributes to funding for faculty research, student scholarships, university resources and facilities, economic development throughout the Commonwealth, and more. Eliza also presented a paper at the Popular Culture Association national conference in April titled “‘I Sometimes Feel as if I've Given Birth to this Island': Death, Rebirth, & the Body in ‘Dear Esther'” in the area of Critical Game Studies. Her paper examined embodied gaming experiences, narratology, and ludology as commentary on coping with loss.

Mohammad Aljajjousi (L&C, 2012) has recently been awarded a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) short-term grant in Digital Humanities. His project focuses on the digitization of novels and the creation of pedagogical tools for English majors through the digital medium. He started his fellowship at the Cologne Center of eHumanities (CCeH) in Cologne, Germany this October.

Nourah Alsubaie (MA Literature, 2016) has accepted a position at UNESCO (Organisation de Nations Unies pour “education la science et la culture) in Paris, France. She is a consultant for the social and human sciences sector.

Gregory Luke Chwala (L&C, final year) presented two papers in 2017. In January, he presented “Decolonial Queer Ecologies and the Speculative Imagination of Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*” at the Modern Language

Association Conference in Philadelphia. In July, he presented “Reconfiguration of the Vampire: A Queer EcoGothic Reading of Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling*” at the International Gothic Association Conference in Cholula, Mexico. His article, “Emerging TransGothic Ecologies in H. Rider Haggard’s *She*,” is forthcoming in a special issue of the *Victorian Review* on Trans Victorians.

Dr. Margaret Cox (L&C, 2016) accepted a tenure-track position in African American literature at Savannah State University. She started her position in Fall 2017.

Sheila M. Farr, (L&C, 5th year) presented a paper entitled “‘There’s no knowing where you might be swept off to’: The Continuing Enchantment of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* Epic” at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in Orlando, Florida. She also presented at the English Graduate Organization 2017 Conference as part of the Popular Culture Methodologies’ Roundtable session entitled “Popular Culture and Pedagogical Possibilities.” This year, Sheila became the Senior Editorial Assistant for the scholarly journal, *Watchung Review*, which is supported by the New Jersey College English Association.

Peter Faziani (L&C, 4th year) had his first small collection of poetry, *Warning Shots*, published by Words Dance Publishing. Additionally, he had “After Zoey, I Question Every Song by Ben Gibbard” published in the most recent edition of IUP’s *New Growth Arts Review* and “Finding Love in All the Wrong Wagons” and “Stiches” published by *The Rising Phoenix Review*. “I’ve Got This Friend #8 (Roads and Atlases)” was in this year’s volume of the *Ocean State Review*. Three more of his poems, “Fall Mornings on Mountain Sides,” “71 Words and Photopaper,” and “Time-lapse daisies,” will be published in the 2016–2017 publication of Lourdes University, *The Tau*.

In addition to his creative work, the postcard poetry journal founded by Peter is now entering its fourth year and with the help and support of faculty and staff of the IUP English Department, the project is continuing to send postcards to all over the United States. *Red Flag Poetry* publishes monthly poems by nationally known and developing poets on postcards and delivers them to the subscriber’s mailbox. It has recently expanded into publishing chapbooks.

While his creative work has been well represented, Peter has also had a piece, “Disrupting the Routine: Going on Strike,” published in the 2017 special issue of IUP’s

Works and Days. He presented “Drawing us into the Drawing Room’s Bigger Purpose; Diotima’s Constructed Community in Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities*” at the 2017 CEA Annual Conference in Hilton Head Island, SC.

Koichi Fujino (L&C, 2015) published *Studying and Teaching W.C. Faulkner, William Faulkner, and Digital Literacy: Personal Democracy in Social Combination* from Lexington Books. Applying Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogical theory, this book explores the ways to study and teach the literary works of William Clark Faulkner and William Faulkner to ESL students in today’s digital environment. He also published two articles, “Experience Tells: Frances E. W. Harper’s *Iola Leroy* and Pragmatism” (2016) and “Sensationalism and Modernism: A Study of Mildred Gilman’s *Sob Sister* and William Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*” (2017). Fujino is a Professor of American Literature and Culture at Seinan Gakuin University, Japan.

Amy L. George (L&C, ABD) will have a new chapbook, *The Stopping Places*, released by Finishing Line Press in March 2018. This collection of poems revolves around the theme of life and all of its seasons of joy and sadness, paralleled with the natural season cycles. It will be available for pre-order Nov. 21–Jan. 19 directly from Finishing Line Press. This is Amy’s third chapbook, her second with Finishing Line Press. (The first was *Desideratum*, published in 2013.)

Abigail Hennon (L&C, 2nd year) served as an editorial assistant for the 69th issue of *Works & Days*. For this issue, she contributed a reflective essay, “A Graduate Student’s Social Media Experience of the October 2016 Strike: #withAPSCUF,” designed the cover of the issue, and collaborated with Matthew Stumpf on the photo essay, “Three Days in October: Photographically Speaking.” In March 2017, Abigail presented “The Importance of Feminine Domesticity in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Crater*” at the College English Association’s 48th Annual Conference in Hilton Head Island, SC. Professionally, she began teaching at Community College of Beaver County, instructing British Literature and Introduction to Reading in the fall of 2017 and Concepts of Literature in the spring of 2018. Abigail became a PhD Candidate in the summer of 2017, receiving a Pass with Distinction in all four periods.

Nick Katsiadis (L&C, 5th year) was recently interviewed by Wendi Maloney of the *Library of Congress Magazine* for his research in Comics Studies. Specifically,

the interview entailed a discussion of his research in representations of historical figures in mainstream comics, and the piece appears in the September/October issue. Nick and fellow Popular Culture Methodologies (PCM) officers coordinated with Dr. Tanya Heflin to deliver presentations during Banned Books Week, and they also coordinated with Dr. Tom Slater and Dr. Rosalee Stillwell on the Film Series this coming year. Lastly, Nick and the PCM officers are partnering with editors of the IUP COMP/TESOL publication *Inspiring Pedagogical Connections* (formerly *Working Papers*). They will be contributors and serve as section editors for the Spring 2018 publication.

M. Nzadi Keita (L&C, 2009) has been awarded a 2017 Pew Fellowship in the Arts for her work as a poet. Keita's most recent book is *Brief Evidence of Heaven: Poems from the life of Anna Murray Douglass* (Whirlwind Press, 2014). In it, persona poems imagine the inner world and relationships of this free-born domestic worker, conventionally illiterate, who marries Frederick Douglass after aiding his escape. Keita's poems have appeared in journals such as *Crab Orchard Review* and anthologies including *The Ringing Ear: Black Poets Lean South*. As an associate professor of English and coordinator of the African-American/Africana Studies program at Ursinus College, she teaches creative writing and American literature. Keita reports being "stunned, grateful, and overwhelmed" to receive the fellowship, which comes with an unrestricted cash award that aids fellows in pursuing opportunities to develop new work.

Tracy Lassiter (L&C, 2013) has been selected to serve as an MLA Bibliography Fellow, a three-year appointment that begins in July 2018. She will be indexing sources for the MLA International Bibliography database. Her research areas will be Native American Studies and petrofiction. She is entering her second year in a tenure-track position at University of New Mexico-Gallup.

Dennis B. Ledden (L&C, 2013) was promoted to Assistant Teaching Professor of English at Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. His most recent research has appeared in *The Hemingway Review*, and his most recent poetry has been published in *California Quarterly* and *Gulf Coast Writers Journal*.

Katie Lee (L&C, 3rd year) published "Racial Unity Through Mitleid: Lewis Nordan, Emmett Till, and the Five Stages of Grief in Wolf Whistle" in *New Theory* (July

2017).

David Linton (MA, 1968) has retired after 20 years of teaching high school English classes and another 28 years as Professor of Communication Arts at Marymount Manhattan College. Over the course of his career he has published a wide variety of journal articles and book chapters on topics as varied as the history of the Luddite Movement, depictions of the reading behavior of the Virgin Mary, the media theories embedded in Shakespeare's plays, and the social construction of menstruation. Most recently, his chapter in a Routledge Press volume on American literature in the 1970's explores the appearance of menstrual cycle themes in the novels of the decade. He has served as President of the New York State Conference of the American Association of University Professors and in a variety of other leadership posts.

Thomas Lawrence Long (L&C, 1997), associate professor in residence in the University of Connecticut's School of Nursing and in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program, has published (with co-author Cheryl Tatano Beck, DNSc, CNM, FAAN) *Writing in Nursing: A Brief Guide* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Dr. Eric Meljac (L&C, 2013) was recently appointed Assistant Professor of English at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. This academic year, two of his articles will be published digitally. One, "Modern Woman/Modern Novel: Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman* and Late-Victorian Modernist Thematics," will appear in *The Victorian*. The other, "The Monster and the Humanities: The Creation of a Pedagogy for the Humanities in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*," will appear in *IMPACT: the Journal for the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* out of Boston University. Meljac has finished a draft of a co-authored book chapter on the postmodern Western *Ghost Town* (with Dr. Alex Hunt). He is currently working on an article on Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, co-authoring an article on the law as represented by Franz Kafka and J. M. Coetzee with a member of WT's School of Business, and beginning research for a piece on literary representations of the death penalty.

Most recently, Meljac was awarded the WTAMU Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities Outstanding Contributions to Service in the Profession Award for his service during the 2016-2017 academic year. As part of his service, Dr. Meljac served as co-

sponsor for the WT chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, served on the Department of English, Philosophy, & Modern Languages Scholarship Committee, procured grants to bring Pushcart-Prize winning poet George Bilgere and Guggenheim Fellow poet Denise Duhamel to WTAMU for public readings, and was elected to the WT Faculty Senate. He also serves as the coordinator of his department's community outreach program known as "Great Books," an event held at Amarillo Public Library where scholars from WT discuss their favorite books with community members in a book club setting.

Meljac is also the recipient of a WTAMU Foundation Development Grant to attend the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association National Convention to moderate a session and present a paper on "Practical Approaches to Teaching Literature." He has recently submitted a proposal to add an African-American Literature course to the department's curriculum, and will be offering a sophomore-level pilot of that course in the Spring '18 semester.



From left to right: Begoña Vilouta-Vázquez, Hediye Özkan, Dr. David Downing, Sahar Al-Shoubaki, and Asmaa Alshehri

Hediye Özkan (L&C, 4th year) published "The Spirit of the Carnival: Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Constantinople" in *Interactions* (2017). The article considers Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography* and why Constantinople depicted in the novel is a critical place where Orlando's sex change occurs. The goal of the article is to discuss the ways in which Constantinople functions as a carnival and center of feast for both Woolf and her character to release them from literary and gender boundaries since the heterogeneous and

pluralistic nature of the city challenges rigid gender roles and hierarchies.

Reza Parchizadeh (L&C, 5th year) continued directing Tahlil Rouz (Daily Analysis), the Persian-language think tank that he started in 2015 to contribute to the production of in-depth analysis of Iran and the Middle East. On June 8, 2017 Reza attended the U.S. Congress to present a policy paper on the dire condition of human rights and democracy in Iran, urging the US government to facilitate the process of Iran's transition to democracy as a measure beneficial to the US security interests. The event attracted a lot of attention and was widely covered by the media worldwide. Reza also co-designed and signed the letter of 111 intellectuals and dissidents to the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, supporting his stance on regime change in Iran. Most recently, Reza co-founded Iranian-American Strategic Research Institute, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., whose goal is to promote human rights and democracy in the Middle East. As its first action, the institute wrote an open letter to President Trump, supporting his stance on Iran, which was signed by 300 activists, experts and ordinary citizens from around the world. During the year, Reza appeared on radio/television programs and published articles on websites, think tanks, and policy-producing institutes around the world, such as *Al-Arabiya*, *Algemeiner*, *American Thinker*, *Breitbart*, *El-Balad*, *El-Watan*, *Jerusalem Online*, *John Bachelor Show*, *Journal of Egypt*, *Kayhan London*, *Mackenzie Institute*, *Radio Israel*, *Tablil Rouz*, and *Times of Israel*. Reza's publications have been translated into other languages, including Arabic, French and Swahili.

Some of Reza's publications are "Security Cinema and the Aesthetic Revival of Ideology," "Political Trends in Lebanon," "The Hashemite, the Doomed Kings," "What is Israelophobia?," "The Foreign Mess Awaiting the Next President," "Egyptians Want Democracy," "Iran Now Vets Academics for Ideological Commitment," "What Should Trump do Next?," "How Climate Change Coverage is an Ideological Affair in Iran," "What Will Happen to the So- Called Nuclear Deal Under the Trump Administration?," "The Road to Moscow Passes through Tehran," "Russia Is Iran's Ally, Not Ours," "The War to End all Wars," "When Iran and Israel Faced off," and "Iran Must Come Home to the West."

Sarah Poeppel (L&C, 2nd year) served as the graduate co-organizer for IUP's 2017 Banned Books Week Read-Out; this is Sarah's second year working with Dr. Tanya Heflin on this event. In March 2017, Sarah presented

“Herman Melville’s Deconstruction of the ‘Savage’ in *Typee*” at the College English Association’s (CEA) 48th Annual Conference in Hilton Head, SC. In the fall of 2017, she began teaching College Writing at Butler County Community College.

Rochelle Spencer (L&C, 6th year) curated, with Dera R. Williams and Audrey T. Williams, *Let’s Play*, an exhibition held at Pro Arts Gallery focusing on the Black Imagination. Rochelle published nonfiction in the *Women’s Review of Books*, *Solstice*, the *Chicago Review of Books*, and *Publishers Weekly* and fiction in the *New York Review* and *The Fantastist*. Rochelle is a member of the AfroSurreal Writers Workshop, a collective recently approved for a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts; she also presented at Black Imagine Oakland and the American Literature Association and is a member of the National Book Critics Circle.

Matthew Stumpf (L&C, 3rd year) presented “Revolution Incarnate: Gwendolyn Brooks and the Assembly of the Black Aesthetic” at the 2017 Radical Humanities Conference held in Newark New Jersey. Matthew also presented at the 2017 College English Association national conference in Hilton Head, SC on the poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks. Stemming from these two conference presentations, Matthew has recently been accepted as the Gwendolyn Brooks contributor for a forthcoming volume on the Black Arts Movement being published by Rowman and Littlefield Press. Additionally, he had a poem, “The Sound of Absalom Dying,” published in the *New Growth Arts Review*, an annual literary publication at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Beyond these written publications, Matthew, with co-editor Abigail Hennon, designed and edited a photography essay published in the 2017 special strike edition of *Works & Days*. On top of this work, the postcard poetry journal for which Matthew is an editor is entering its fourth year, and has expanded into publishing not only the monthly postcards we have all come to love, but also chapbooks and full-length collections of poetry.

Rachael Warmington (L&C, 5th year) is the president of the New Jersey College English Association. Rachael presented “Reimagining Arthurian Characters, Motifs and Themes in Contemporary Adaptations and Appropriations of Arthurian Legend” at the 38th Annual

Medieval and Renaissance Forum in April 2017. She was also the conference chair for the New Jersey College English Association’s 40th Annual Conference. Rachael presented her paper “Othering Pagan Archetypes: Reimaginings of Merlin and Morgan le Fay” at the 28th Mid-Atlantic Popular & American Culture Association Conference in November 2017. She is also the editor-in-chief for the academic journal *Watchung Review* and a member of the International Arthurian Society as well as Phi Kappa Phi and Golden Key honor societies.

Eric Wentz (L&C, 1st year) graduated from the MA Literature program in May and began his PhD studies in Literature and Criticism during the summer of 2017. He presented “‘The Evening Star is gone’: Memory and the English Home in 19th Century British Poetry” at the IUP Graduate Scholars Forum; “[C]hurlishly reject[ing] his company’: American Masculinity and the Exclusion of David Gamut in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992),” at the Midwest Popular Culture Association Conference in St. Louis, MO; and “Up ‘Close’ and Personal: Text-Dependent Analysis” with Dr. Jaqueline Myers from the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown at the Keystone State Reading Association Conference in Hershey, PA. His essay, “Teaching and the Rhetoric of Difference in the Poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks and Len Lawson,” was accepted for publication in the 2017 issue of *Pennsylvania English*.

Zainab Younus (L&C, 2nd year) was awarded the Fulbright Scholarship in 2016 to pursue her PhD. In March 2017 she presented “Interactive Fictions” as part of the #Keywords Chats on Digital Culture series with the Center for Digital Humanities and Culture at IUP. Interactive Fiction is considered a form of born-digital literature and forerunner to contemporary narrative video games. She also presented a paper entitled “Demythologizing Shakespeare: The Whys, the Where-ofs and the Where-withs” as part of the Popular Culture and Pedagogy panel at the English Graduate Organization Interdisciplinary Conference in February 2017. She serves as Secretary to Popular Culture Methodologies and is also the Treasurer of EGO for 2017–18.

Steve Zimmerly (L&C PhD, 2016) accepted a tenure track position in English at the University of Indianapolis, which began fall 2017.



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES! THESIS AND DISSERTATION TITLES

The following students successfully graduated in December 2016, May 2017, & August 2017:

M.A./Literature:

Imran K. Alkhalifah, Mandi L. Bell, Jedidiah T. Fetterman, Talal M. Khamaj, Abdulaziz Y. Almuthaybiri, Kathrine A. Clark, Olivia D. Maderer, Shane V. Sedlemyer, and Eric M. Wentz

M.A./ Composition and Literature:

Ahmed Alshayyan, Rufaydah I. Bineid, Johanna H. Rahkonen, Michael G. Cooper, and Alexander J. Hagood

December 2016

- Tayseer Y. Abu Odeh, "Exile, Counterpoint and Late Style in the Work of Edward Said, Mahmoud Darwish, and Nuruddin Farah"
- Erin M. Guydish, "Fabulous Ordinairiness & Self-Making: The Other Side of Usonian Identities"
- Stephen M. Zimmerly, "The Sidekick Comes of Age: Tracing the growth of Secondary Characters in Young Adult Literature"

May 2017

- Hamzeh A. Al-Jarrah, "The Identity Question in Black Existential Drama and Its Existential Manifestations"
- Met Eb Alnwairan, "Representations of Muslims on the English Restoration Stage"
- Jeffrey S. Markovitz, "Loneliness in the Gold: The American Campus Novel and the Corporatization of the American University"
- Hershell N. Proctor-Walden, "Black Atlantic Connections: The Black Arts Movement and Wole Soyinka"
- Sarah C. Rice, "A Tale as Old as Time: Bronte's Agnes Grey as Recycled Fairy Tale"
- Jesse Ulmer, "Popular Music in the Films of Joel and Ethan Coen"
- Robert Welch, "The Development of Affect Theory in American Naturalist Fiction"

August 2017

- Menia Almenia, "Behind the Violence: Hegemony, Resistance and the World-System in Third World Postcolonial Literature"
- Samantha K. Fitch, "Victorian Pockets: Fashion, Gender and Economics in the Novels of George Eliot"
- Brian R. Lutz, "Poetic Hybridity"
- Ruth M. Oldman, "Negotiating a Nation: Imperialism, Multiculturalism, and the Evolution of Identity in Medieval Scottish Borderland Literature"
- Judith Saunders, "Configuring the Problematic Special Relationship in British Theater"
- Jason R. Seals, "'It Seemed All right, But It Wasn't': The Naturalistic Science Fiction of Jack London"
- Sherry R. Shindelar, "'Will you . . . ? 'I will . . . ' and 'I do': Re-envisioning Matrimony in Civil War Literature"
- Lauren E. Shoemaker, "Structures of Terror in Caribbean Women's Writing"

DATES TO REMEMBER

LATE FALL 2017

Last Day of Fall Classes:	December 11
Final exams:	December 12–15
Commencement:	December 16

SPRING 2018

Candidacy Exam:	January 18–19
Classes Begin:	January 22
May graduation applications:	May 1
Spring Recess:	March 12–17
Last day of Spring classes:	May 4
Final Exams:	May 7–10
Commencement:	May 12

FUTURE DATES FOR PLANNING 2018

Pre-Session 1:	May 14–18
Pre-Session 2:	May 21–25
Candidacy Exam:	May 24–May 25
Summer Session 1 classes:	May 29–June 21

Summer Session 2 classes:	July 2–July 26
Candidacy Exam:	August 23–24
Fall 2018 classes begin:	August 27

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Priority review will be given to applications received by the following deadlines:

- For summer: January 15 for early decision or March 15 for second round.
- For fall semester: January 15 for early decision or March 15 for second round.
- Applications received after March 15 may be considered on a rolling basis, but only in the case that there are still openings in the program.

For more information into the English Graduate Programs at IUP and to apply online:

<https://www.iup.edu/admissions/graduate/programs/list/>



2017 PhD Cohort. Back Row (left to right): Ahmad Tahat, Alexander Hagood, John Mabold, Shane Sedlemyer, Nedrick Patrick; **Front Row (left to right):** Lisa Mazey, Ahlam Abulaila, Naemah Alrasheedi, Olivia Maderer



Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Director, Graduate Studies in Literature and Criticism
English Department
Humanities and Social Sciences Building
981 Grant St.
Indiana, PA 15705-1087

4005315305

**Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 198
Indiana, PA 15701**

