



Indiana University of Pennsylvania L & C Program Newsletter
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Literature & Criticism

From the Director



Like many of you, I am both excited and anxious about change. When at the precipice of other significant changes in my professional life, I have found myself staring down two diverging roads (does this sound familiar??). On one road, I see a rosy, smooth path forward, filled with all the good things I could possibly imagine from said change. In

those moments I am filled with thoughts of how to get to the good place I see, how to get from uncertainty to promise. But almost in the next breath, the “what if” fears set in—what if the timeline doesn’t happen, the funding doesn’t come through, the conversation doesn’t go well, I’m not up to the challenge or my vision is simply unrealistic? What if the good thing that I’m hoping for doesn’t materialize...? The second road threatens to freeze me in place, closing off all possibility.

Now is such a moment of change—in higher education generally, and for the L&C program. In the wake of the pandemic and following the path that dozens of universities around the country have already laid, IUP has announced an institutional reorganization. This one will eliminate our long-time academic home in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) and situate the Department of English in an as-yet-unnamed college. The new college will house some departments formerly in the CHSS (Asian Studies; English; Foreign

Languages; History; Philosophy and Religious Studies; and Political Science) alongside those in the College of Fine Arts.

So, let’s start by acknowledging what is scary about this change. For current students and those who are considering joining our intellectual community, the news of such a significant change can be unnerving. The same is true for those of us who have been around for a while. With such an announcement we immediately start wondering if our investment of time and energy are under threat and if our resources can weather the storm. As faculty, we worry about the implications for our students and curriculum, about establishing new relationships with colleagues who were formerly more distant from us, about meeting new administrative heads and learning work styles and processes that are potentially quite different from those we have come to know. We all wonder what steps we should take to protect ourselves and to soften the shock of changes that we did not initiate.

It would be a little odd if this announced change didn’t cause us some concern, but left unchecked, it can distort our vision and lead us to fold in on ourselves in a protective stance that leaves little opportunity for creative thinking—or hope.

Let us remember that at many universities, humanities and fine arts departments have long been under one administrative roof. They have been seen as siblings, or perhaps close cousins, in the organization of higher education—the cornerstones of the liberal arts. Our disciplines concern themselves with human creative and intellectual production, human history, expression and communication. We are interested in questions about what makes us human; how we create, transform and represent our inner and outer worlds; and what our responsibilities are to other each other and the world we inhabit. So, combining these two colleges is not uncharted territory. Our union has a rich history and

rationale that can lead to a greater understanding of our purpose.

When I start from this point, I become excited about the new “nearness” of colleagues who work in disciplines that are related to what we do in the L&C program. I am envisioning the possibility of graduate level theater courses to complement the study of drama that we have long-offered in L&C, or offering courses that focus on literature from other countries (taught in translation) more regularly. Imagine the richness of a class that included L&C and MFA students thinking through the literariness of music or the musicality of literature (such a course has been offered at the undergraduate level already). Or opportunities to work collaboratively on public projects that bring a broader audience into conversation with and through literature and the arts. To be sure, I love what we do and what we have built in the L&C program, but I am also intrigued by the possibility of *expanding* what we do, at a time when we need literary study, writ large, more than ever. I am excited by the possibility of...well, possibility.

And so, I am permitting myself, and challenging us all, to nurture excitement for the future--not out of a blindness or naivete about the challenges that face us as we navigate this transition, but out of confidence in our ability to imagine better. Now is the time to consider

how our expertise and talents can help shape the vision of the new college. Now is the time for us to commit to partnering with new peers and colleagues to advance diversity, equity and inclusion so that all students—including our wonderfully diverse L&C student body—have no institutional barriers to their success. Now is the time to imagine what we want for the next twenty years of our program.

And now is the time for productive questions that can guide us in this time of change. What values do we want to prioritize as we integrate into a new college? What skills should graduate students of the new college emerge with? What pre-professional experiences should Literature and Criticism graduates have, and how do we ensure that *everyone* has access to them? What careers should our alum be able to pursue...and create? What are our hopes and dreams and how do we get there from here? These are the questions that will enable L&C to chart a path that is of our own making. I suggest we use this time of upheaval to be cautiously optimistic, to dream, and yes, to be excited for the future that we can work to create.

Veronica T. Watson, PhD

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From the Director of the MA in Literature and the MA in Composition and Literature Programs

Congratulations to all of our MA students on making it through a semester that was unlike any other! Your dedication, perseverance, and openness to new modes of reading, writing, and thinking were an inspiration. With limited opportunities to interact in person, you made interactions on Zoom matter more, and you created a warm and inviting learning environment for each other. Those of you who have been in the program for more than a semester know that the transition to MA level work involves many, many adjustments. It is not easy under normal circumstances, when you have friendly faces to meet you before and after class, when you can go food shopping together while talking about Classical Poetry and Romantic literature, when you can play and work in a supportive environment, and when you can study and learn together at the library, in 506 HSS, outside the classroom, and in the Oak Grove. When all of those opportunities are significantly limited, and when conferences that would normally stimulate your research interests are either cancelled or help remotely, the transition is more difficult. Adding the adjustment to a new learning platform adds to the difficulty. Many of you were also teaching high school and middle school English in strange circumstances, often through hybrid modes that placed significant demands on you. Thank you for your work, teachers! Your contributions this semester have been amazing.

So, you made it through with grace, good cheer, a strong faith in the processes of reading and writing, and a deep engagement with the books that you worked on. Whether you were finishing the MA program, in the middle, or just starting, you did it. You made it!

Please therefore join me in welcoming our 2020 new students and congratulating our December 2020 graduates!

We look forward to the changes that 2021 will bring, including the transition to a new college, the promise of fruitful collaborations with colleagues in new departments, and greater opportunities to make the most of remote delivery education.

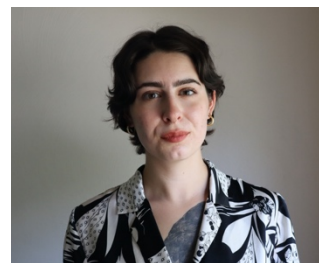
Partnerships with the IUP Library, especially the Special Collections Department, with colleagues involved in the Dessy-Roffman Myth Collaborative, with Pennsylvania College English Association, and above all with the English Graduate Organization (EGO), will make the new year a dynamic and interesting one.

I am on sabbatical for Spring 2021, and I have the great pleasure of announcing that Dr. Melanie Holm will serve as Acting MA Director during that time. Please welcome her! I will be back in the Summer, full of new ideas and full of new opportunities for you all. I look forward to sharing those ideas and opportunities as we work together to understand Literature in new ways, especially ways that fold in knowledge from the field of Composition. See you in the Summer!

Michael T. Williamson, PhD



Humanities Training for Law Enforcement: A New Perspective By: Tay Jones



This summer, I began working with Dr. Watson, Dr. Williamson, and an interdisciplinary team on our pilot program titled Humanities Training for Law Enforcement (HTLE). Our mission is to

use the humanities to help train police in ways that decrease police bias and questionable uses of force by deepening their ability to identify and correct racial stereotypes that negatively impact their ability to engage diverse communities. With the help of professors and graduate assistants from the Departments of Sociology

and Criminology we will measure the outcomes to determine the impact of this approach.

The curriculum we have developed is centered around Black detective fiction. The cadets read and then engage in purposeful, structured reflection and dialogue to identify potential policing strategies and professional actions that support community policing and procedural justice.

We will be selecting two novels from a short list that includes Penny Mickelbury's *Two Graves Dug* and *Darkness Descending*, Walter Mosley's *Bad Boy Branley Brown*, and Gary Phillips' *Perdition, U.S.A.* Each of these novels is centered on policing in Black communities and communities of color. *Two Graves Dug*, *Branley Brown*, and *Perdition* focus on the work of private investigators in these communities, while *Darkness Descending* has a police officer as one of the main characters. They are all great reads; I highly suggest them!

When we begin to pilot the program in January 2021, I'll be a trainer along with Drs. Watson and Williamson. My style of holding discussions, informed by evidence-based facilitation methods from the IUP Difficult Dialogues Project (DDP), focuses on building community, engaged listening, acknowledging and limiting power dynamics within a discussion group, and on a collaborative, restorative justice method of recalibrating discussions when harmful disagreements arise. I have been working with the IUP DDP since its formation at IUP in Fall 2019. One of my main takeaways from this DDP work is to thoughtfully consider the environment that uncomfortable conversations is taking place in, so participants are more willing to meet others in dialogue. As our conversations with the IUP cadets may raise difficult issues about policing and race in the U.S., the DDP facilitation methods will help create the environment in which to have these difficult dialogues.

My hope is that this program will radically change the system of policing in this country, ensuring policing truly aligns with the motto "To Protect and Serve." This is not a small ask, but I believe the HTLE training can help to bring about this change.



LIFE AFTER IUP

By: Sheila Farr

I never imagined beginning my career in the middle of a pandemic, and I never imagined that the timing of my journey would be so critical. As I'm writing this at the end of 2020, I just finished my first semester as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of English at Thiel College in Greenville, Pennsylvania.

This new chapter of my life began in February 2020 when I submitted my application for the position. Things moved rather quickly after this point. At the end of February, I completed an initial phone interview with the search committee, and on March 11, I was on campus for my second interview. This was two days before the campus closed for the rest of the Spring 2020



semester. Most of my casual conversations with the Thiel community on that day centered around the possible closure of the college and the challenges of moving to virtual learning. On March 16, I was offered the position of

tenure-track Assistant Professor, the same day that the governor of Pennsylvania issued the state-wide shut-down order. I knew I would likely accept the position, but I didn't that day. That day, my husband and I, like so many others, rushed around town to make necessary purchases and returns before the stores closed that evening.

I accepted the position the next day, and despite what was happening in the world around me, I was shocked and ecstatic that I managed to obtain a tenure-track position only months after I graduated in December 2019. It was a bright moment in a rather dark year. Looking back, I am acutely aware of my privilege and luck, for so many other people on the job market this year were unsuccessful.

I also never imagined the immense challenges I would face at the beginning of my career due to COVID-19. At the beginning of October, I began to feel unwell and received a positive COVID-19 test result. I quickly

became very sick and often could not manage to conduct my classes on Zoom. I had every single symptom on the list, and the fatigue, headaches, and shortness of breath were almost unmanageable. Eventually, I found myself in the emergency room, though luckily did not need to be hospitalized. Throughout these weeks, I wondered how I was going to finish my semester. I was already overwhelmed with teaching 4 different classes with new preps, and the essays to grade were piling up.

There are 2 professional factors that helped me to overcome the “coronacoaster” (as my students termed it) and its challenges: the support system at Thiel and my varied experiences from IUP. I have been lucky to have continuous supportive advisors and administrators from IUP to Thiel. It was difficult to balance my professional life and self-care while I was sick, and I am grateful to my department chair and dean at Thiel, who were able to reign me in when I was trying to take on too much work during my recovery. Most of all, I commend my students at Thiel for their patience, understanding, and adaptability as I attempted to offer the best instruction possible during the month of October. For those of you reading this story that are beginning their doctoral career, you will find that aligning yourself with supportive people will account for half of your success in completing the degree.

For me, those people at IUP include Dr. David Downing and Dr. Veronica Watson, my L&C program directors; Dr. Gian Pagnucci, my department chair; Dean Yaw Asamoah and Associate Dean Dot Gracey in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences; and, most of all, Dr. Tanya Heflin, my dissertation advisor. I don’t have enough space in this write-up to detail what each of these exemplary people have done for me; they already know.

The best advice I can give any new student in the L&C PhD program is to select an advisor who will support you and challenge you in the right ways, even if that advisor isn’t directly related to your field. The professors are the heart of the L&C program. Get to know them. Take a variety of classes. Be open-minded. Make a point to meet with them during their office hours. You will find the right advisor, and when you do—as I did—you will have the guide you need to navigate the rest of your

arduous doctoral career and the often-challenging path to your professional career.

The path to your professional career should also begin with the Job Placement workshops offered by the L&C and CAL graduate programs. I am convinced that 50% of the reason I got my job is because of this program. I knew how to draft and present myself in my application materials, and I knew what would be expected of me during my on-campus interview, from the teaching demonstration to the minutia of the casual conversation at dinner. I was nervous during my phone and my on-campus interviews, but I was prepared. And the search committee noticed. Getting a job is more than being an expert in your field; it’s about knowing how to be professional and how to be a new colleague. I had to communicate and collaborate with a lot of faculty, administration, and staff when I was recovering from COVID-19, and I felt prepared to handle my situation in a professional way because I knew what was expected of me in academia.



While the support systems and professional-training background helped me to face the challenges I experienced this semester, what helped me the most was the pedagogical experiences I gained at IUP. As a part-time temporary instructor at IUP, I taught my own classes and participated in the mentoring program. I was treated as a valued faculty member, and my experience teaching at IUP allowed me to experiment with pedagogical practices and hone my teaching philosophy. When I had to adapt to teaching during a pandemic, I was ready, even though it was frustrating.

The most rewarding aspect about my first semester of my career was that my students still felt that they had meaningful instruction in my classes despite the varied ways I had to offer that instruction. I have learned that my students are very adaptable, and that gave me the encouragement I needed to offer more experimental instruction. Plus, I was also lucky enough to conduct my classes fact-to-face (other than when I was sick) because Thiel was uniquely and safely able to maintain some element of normalcy during an unprecedented time.

The opportunity to write this story for the L&C newsletter has allowed me to take some time to reflect, and what I realized most is that connections matter. I am a Thiel alumna, and I never imagined I would return to campus as a professor in the English Department where I spent countless hours of my undergraduate career. My final piece of advice to new students in the L&C program is to make and maintain connections. In this time of necessary isolation, it has never been more important to stay connected. After all, this is why we are humanists.



EGO: A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

“What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.”

-Kurt Vonnegut



Whether it is your first semester in the English Department, or you are a returning student, I extend my warmest welcome to you. With another semester underway, I would like to take a moment to discuss the goals for the English Graduate Organization (EGO) this year.

Kurt Vonnegut put it best the mission of EGO for this academic year: we strive to build a scholarly community within which everyone belongs and can find solace from this crazy world through shared literary experiences. With this in mind, our goals for this year are centered

around creating a community experience, despite the unforeseen circumstances of a pandemic. Our aim is to provide all English graduate students—from the first semester master’s student to the dissertation phase doctoral student—with the support and resources needed for their particular place within the program. In broad terms, the role of EGO has always been to provide students with the necessary opportunities to grow professionally and socially while completing their degrees. While every year is significantly different than years past, this year’s officers are an extremely dedicated bunch who have ensured that EGO is firing on all cylinders to make this mission a success. Several opportunities have already been scheduled for this semester, but feel free to share other suggestions with any officer.

Reflecting on the student body of the English department, the board spent time discussing the best approach for our workshops this semester given the sometimes rapid changes that the university has to make to keep everyone safe during the pandemic. We decided that this year our focus should be on social events that bring people together at a time when one-on-one interactions are limited. Therefore, our workshops have been focused on community building, including a horror film series that provides students a creative outlet to explore another medium; a conference workshop series that enables students and faculty to work together to gain conference skillsets that will be applicable to their academic careers; and several social events. Each of these workshops serve a distinct purpose, to challenge graduate students in various areas of their academic and professional careers, as well as to address repeated concerns voiced throughout the graduate programs.

EGO’s dedication to creating social events that bring together all members of the department and create a sense of community has been highlighted the most this semester. As several of our English professors proclaim, our department is a community of scholars, and EGO aims to embolize that. EGO kicked off the semester with a successful picnic at Getty Heights Park that drew in professors and students alike. The amount of support we received proved to us that the student body has been receptive to EGO’s mission thus far this year. For that, we are extremely grateful. In the fall, we also hosted a campfire in order to welcome in the change of the season and decompress from midterms, and a virtual

reading of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We are planning a summer performance of *Macbeth*.

While all of these are organized events by the officers of EGO, I would like to emphasize that community is not simply an event. Community is created and enhanced by small and simple moments like taking out a classmate to a socially-distanced cup of coffee to discuss a class, or exchanging a few texts to check in on someone. This is the sense of comradery that EGO aims to create, and we encourage all students to take the initiative to create this sense of community regardless of an organized event.

EGO recognizes that there is a need more than ever before for the English department to spread the love of literature and to teach others in the university setting what power language can have. For this reason, we were the organizers behind Banned Books Week this year and were able to collect readings from both students and professors across the university. Even President Driscoll took part in the event. If you are interested in checking out the readings from Banned Books Week, you can find EGO on [Youtube](#). Looking forward, we are planning to hold our annual graduate conference in the spring in a virtual format.

Overall, I would like to recognize Dr. Michael Williamson, the advisor of EGO, for his constant dedication to the organization. Each and every officer also deserves a hearty thank you for their constant zeal and devotion to EGO's mission. So, from the bottom of my heart, thank you to: Brian Sateriale, our energetic and outgoing vice president; Kaitlynn Sass, the most efficient secretary; Brett Berquist, the treasurer unafraid to challenge the systems in place; Jeff Ambrose, our hardworking and creative workshop coordinator; Joe Canton, our social media wizard; and Dan Helman, our highly skilled and experienced webmaster. As we've had to transition our long-standing programming, all have gone above and beyond the call to action for the English Graduate Organization.

If anyone is interested in more information about EGO or upcoming events, please feel free to email me.

Kimberly Bressler
President, English Graduate Organization

Building Social Understanding: What Is Our Role?

By: Karen Griscom

The word *understanding* has a long history. According to the OED, early literary uses of the word *understanding* denote intelligence or a capacity to reason. Examples of such usage are found in Langland's *Piers Plowman* (1393) and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). It is not until 1649 that OED notes an additional resonance with the sense of "amicable relations" in Oliver Cromwell's eighth of March letter regarding his son Richard's marriage. The senior Cromwell writes to Richard's future father-in-law, "I trust there will be a right understanding between us, and a good conclusion." While it is impossible to ignore the transactional subtext of a letter regarding a marriage contract there is more evidence that *understanding* was beginning to have an expanded valence in the seventeenth-century. The OED notes that "amicable" described actions "done in a friendly spirit, with mutual goodwill." Understanding, in the sense of *amicable* relations and a spirit of mutual goodwill, is at the heart of the English Department's nascent Forum for Social Understanding.

The Forum for Social Understanding began meeting this summer in response to the local, national, and international outcry over the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Some of you may remember Dr. Veronica Watson's early June letter to the department in which she wrote, "There are real consequences to our silence and failure to act—a long list of consequences whose names we learn for a short time, but who represent the many we do not ever hear about." Around the same time, Dr. Tom Slater proposed a discussion series that would be "a means for creating an elevated consciousness about race . . . through open, broad-based discussions that include students, faculty, and administrators from across campus." Several English department students and faculty exchanged ideas about topics, and the first discussion took place on the seventh of July.

The film *Just Mercy*, released at the end of 2019, was the focus of the first discussion. The film tells the story of wrongly accused Walter McMillian, who was sentenced

to death and incarcerated for six years before Bryan Stevenson, a young attorney and the *Equal Justice Initiative* founder, appealed the conviction and won McMillian's release. The film shows the devastating effects of the new Jim Crow. The discussion drew many participants from across the campus: undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Participants discussed personal reactions to the story, the film's artistic power, and the connections between past and present injustices.

The Netflix television series *Dear White People* was the focus of the summer's second and third discussions, supplemented by short video clips from the *Whiteness Project* and the *New York Times*' series *26 Mini-Films for Exploring Race, Bias, and Identity with Students*. Both of the meetings invited discussion about whiteness and institutional racism. Participants were eager to extend the dialogue about *Dear White People* to the next meeting, so the group viewed and discussed additional series episodes. *The New York Times* short films facilitated dialogue and questions about white supremacy's particular effects on Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous communities in the U.S.

Before the fall semester began, the group met again to discuss the film *American Son* and two poems by the award-winning poet Marilyn Nelson, the former poet laureate of Connecticut. *American Son* spotlights the particular anxiety and suffering of parents whose son or daughter might become the next police shooting statistic. Marilyn Nelson's poem "Farm Garden" concerns the extraordinary story of Venture Smith, the eighteenth-century man who was kidnapped at age six, suffered the harrowing Middle Passage to New England, and spent thirty years enslaved before he could buy his and his families' freedom. Nelson's dramatic monologue animates Venture Smith's suffering and resilience.

Kyesha Jennings, an English Literature and Criticism doctoral candidate and hip-hop scholar, introduced the fall semester's first discussion with her talk on hip-hop, social justice, and the Pittsburgh hip-hop artist and activist Jasiri X. Jennings's research and extensive writing

on the topic made her the ideal discussion leader to provide essential context for the forum. In her June 2020 Indyweek article on Deniro Farrar's new album, Jennings illustrates the relevance of hip-hop for this moment of protests and national pain. She writes, "Extending the legacy of Negro spirituals and blues music, hip-hop has functioned as survival music for Black people since its conception." Jennings's remarks on the topic and Jasiri X's timely songs and social justice work drew a large gathering from across the campus.

The second forum of the fall semester considered racism in American religion with the documentary *White Savior*. The film's trailer promotes the film as "an invitation to unlearn the habits of whiteness that inflect American Christianity." IUP's Dr. Dorcas Dennis, a professor in the Religious Studies department, opened the talk with a short presentation that invited thoughtful discussion.

Over the past months, the university has offered valuable programming for talking about social justice, but the Forum for Social Understanding provides participants the distinct opportunity to participate in—or listen to—a dialogue about social justice. Dr. Crystal Machado, an IUP professor of Education and Social Science, says she values the forum's diverse audience and encourages her students to attend because discussions like these teach us to be better human beings and better teachers. This forum is especially

valuable to those of us who study English because language, communication, and culture are integral to our work. Whether undergraduate or graduate, English students benefit from learning how to discuss consequential topics like race, class, and gender. For students who plan to teach, understanding and communicating with a diverse audience is essential. No amount of reading can substitute for the practical experience of discussions about provocative texts with people who have different backgrounds and perspectives.

The Forum for Social Understanding relies on student involvement. In his forum proposal, Dr. Slater emphasized that topics ought to derive from students,

"from what students have found an interest in and wish to explore." The group hopes future discussions will explore xenophobia, sex and gender discrimination, and religious intolerance—all in the spirit of understanding and mutual goodwill. In her June letter to the English department, Dr. Watson reminded us that "[b]uilding an anti-racist community wherever we are calls on each of us to ACT—in our homes, in our classrooms, at our jobs, and in our communities." When we build a better community through social understanding, we build a better community not just for others, but also for ourselves. Who does not want to live in a better, more just, more tolerant community? Please consider joining the discussion at the Forum for Social Understanding.



3 International Students Discuss Their Remote Class Experiences

By: Sameer Hameed

It is not easy academic life for many students worldwide this year, especially the international students who could not get Visas to the United States due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Three international students in the L&C program—Xiaoyu Gao from China, Kheiriyeh Ahmadi from Kuwait, and Erick Marco Ramos from the Philippines—shared some of the issues they have



navigated in fall 2020.

Xiaoyu Gao (L&C, 1st Year) cannot come to the United States to pursue her Ph.D. physically

due to the pandemic, which makes her academic mission a little more challenging. While pursuing PhD remotely, she experiences obstacles that she would have not found in face-to-face learning. She says, "having finished my masters at Eastern Illinois University, I miss being able to interact with my classmates and professors in a more

personal setting." It has also been a major adjustment getting used to sitting at home with her family and life still going on while she is focusing on her studies. "In China, distance learning is not something that is very common, so it's been hard for me to adjust, along with my parents who sometimes still hold the mentality that computers equal playing video games" she said.

One of the major issues that she struggles with is trying to adjust her sleep schedule to match classes so that she can learn with her classmates. China is 12 hours ahead of eastern standard time, so she needs to wake up 3–4 AM in order to take part in her school activities. Yet, she comments, "while it's been harder to develop that sense of community since we aren't able to connect face to face, I've been using emails and FB groups to keep in contact with classmates. It definitely does not replace the face-to-face feeling of interactions. However, at least it helps foster a sense of community."

She also provides terrific advice for the international students who are facing the same issue: "My advice to anyone who finds themselves in a similar situation is to set a time table and adjust your sleep schedule as soon as possible. I waited too late to try and adjust my schedule, and it was very hard for me the first few weeks. I am not someone who can function on a lack of sleep, so the time difference was another thing that added to my stress. Combatting these issues as soon as you can will help reduce stress and allow you to succeed."

Kheiriyeh Ahmadi (L&C, 1st year) started taking classes remotely this past summer as a Summers-only student. So far, it has been a wonderfully rich yet challenging journey for her. She is grateful to all her professors and believes that her 2:00 AM classes have been unbelievably gratifying!



But Kheiriyeh also admits, "This is not how I imagined it! It might be an understatement to say that being geographically far away (seven hours apart!) has made my doctoral journey a challenging experience.

The worst aspect of remote learning in my case is the time zone difference, which constantly generates a sense of disconnect and detachment.” The remote start to her doctoral studies has been especially difficult since she continued teaching in Kuwait. “It feels as if I’m working both day and nighttime shifts,” she says. She also misses being in the US, experiencing the culture and Americans’ friendliness and hospitality. “More importantly,” she continues, I miss being on IUP’s campus and getting to know my professors and colleagues closely. Sadly, I haven’t had the time to connect virtually with the IUP community much.”

Kheiriyeh’s advice for her fellow international students: “first it will feel undoable. However, soon with the support and acknowledgment that you receive from your IUP faculty and community, you will get used to it and even begin to enjoy this remote learning experience. Think about how much you are saving too!”

Erick Marco Ramos (L&C, 1st year) lives in Manila in the Philippines. He was supposed to be in Indiana, PA this fall for school but, unfortunately, like many others, he could not get a Visa to the United States. However, he is grateful that technology has made it possible for him to start his doctoral studies, otherwise, he would have delayed the start of his Ph.D. until the next year.



Marco stays positive about his online classes. He quips, “I always joke that I don’t need to shower to come to class. I can attend class in my boxers, and no one would know.” But there’s another benefit too. Marco is blind, and as he says, “Staying indoors is an advantage for me since I don’t need to deal with all of the preparations for leaving my house. I’m independent, but going out is sometimes a bit stressful.”

Like everyone I interviewed for this story, Marco misses face-to-face classes, “I am a talker and I thrive in opportunities where I can talk to classmates. I get great

ideas from talking to friends before and after class. I feel these little conversations help me process what I am learning much better. That is a bit difficult to do now.” He also has to sleep early and wake up at 2:00 or 3:00 AM to make it to class on time, and to formulate contingency plans in case internet service drops in Manila.

“I am an international student and disabled,” Marco says; “I have very specific needs and addressing those is key to making this work.” Therefore, he constantly communicates with the Office of International Education and the Department of Disability Access and Advising. He also communicates with classmates as much as he can.

Marco also offers this advice to other students who are taking classes remotely: “This can be stressful because it is new to all of us, so it is important to watch out for your well-being too. Being on-screen for extended periods of time can take its toll. Be aware of your mental state and emotions, know when to rest and take a break, and figure out ways to cope.”

Online or not, that’s great advice for all of us!



MEET OUR MA STUDENTS!

Olivia Faiad (MA Literature) has an interest in all things “taboo”: serial killers, ghost stories, urban legends, myths, alchemy, and anything supernatural. She is also interested in trauma theory, psychoanalytic theory, and reader response theory. As part of her GA she is working on women’s war writing.

Joshua Patrick Calandrella (MA Literature) has academic interests that include contemporary Latin American literature, translation studies, religious mysticism, and textual criticism within Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. He plans to study classical Hebrew and publish English translations of Yiddish poetry.

Mace Long (MA Composition and Literature) is currently working on a science fiction and anthropology/archaeology research project. His interests include the

Atlantis myth, Roman and Greek history, Warhammer literature, D.C. Comics, 1930s to 1960s action/adventure, Western, horror, science fiction, superhero films and graphic novels.

Shirley Ann Petropoulos (MA Literature) wants to research film adaptations of Jane Austen novels. She is also interested in Shakespeare's plays and contemporary literature like the Harry Potter series.

Kimberly Ann Nichols (MA in Composition and Literature) has research interests that include fantasy fiction and young adult literature. She is also passionate about martial arts, health and fitness, women's and children's issues (sexual abuse, domestic violence, rape, inequality, etc.), women and religion, metalsmithing, and the supernatural (extrasensory perception and out of body experiences).

Kylee Carcione (MA Literature) is currently working on women's war writing as a part of her GA project. Her current research interests include postcolonial women's studies, LGBTQ+ literature, and feminist and queer theory. She is also interested in horror (specifically gore, psychological horror, and the supernatural), graphic novels, and practically anything related to Edgar Allan Poe.

Tom Hamilton (MA Composition and Literature) is gaining professional experience as a tutor at the Jones Writing Center this year. He is interested in how literature of many genres can seep in and flow out of the gaps and spaces in life to reveal truth and give voice to individuals and communities, especially those who are marginalized.

Summer Storm Stephenson (MA Composition and Literature) is part of a team working on women's war writing. Her research interests include black women's literature, feminist literature, horror/gothic literature, young adult literature, and anything about mental health. Some of her newest interests are Abraham Sutzkever and women's war writing.

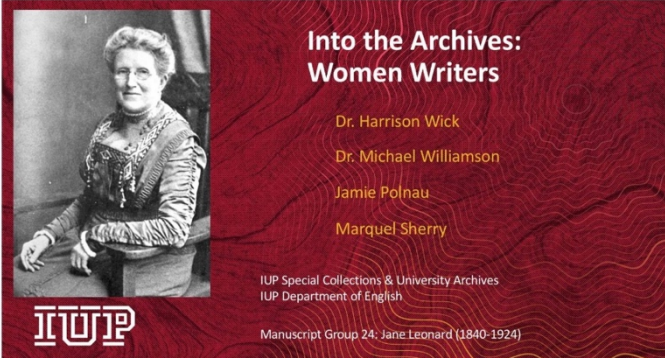
Emily O'Donnell (MA Composition and Literature) earned her B.S. in English Education from IUP in 2019 and currently teach 7th grade English Language Arts. Her research interests include young adult literature, world mythology (particularly Greek/Roman), historical

fiction, Jane Austen and the Victorian era, and teaching empathy through literature.

Wyatt Shank (MA Literature) earned his B.S. from IUP in English Education. His interests include fantasy and science fiction, particularly Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Greek, Norse, and Egyptian mythology. As part of his GA, he is researching trends in science fiction literature.

Madeleine Rosa (MA TESOL) is interested in meditative creative writing as a means of second language acquisition and translanguaging in the classroom. She is also interested in how literature shapes our worldviews as they appeal to different intersections and identities, specifically in science fiction and women's literature.

Jacob Breslawski (MA Composition and Literature) has recent work that is centered around mystical interpretations of literature, moments of transcendence, and how language creates and warps reality. His research interests are currently broad, but he would like to delve deeper into modern short fiction and poetry, video games as literature, postmodernism and surrealism.



**Into the Archives:
Women Writers**

Dr. Harrison Wick
Dr. Michael Williamson
Jamie Polnau
Marquel Sherry

IUP Special Collections & University Archives
IUP Department of English

Manuscript Group 24: Jane Leonard (1840-1924)

Students, faculty, and Staff work on collaborative projects throughout the year, including the Into the Archives series that highlights IUP's Special Collections and University Archives holdings.

MEET OUR NEW PHD COHORT

Kheiriyeh Ahmadi graduated from the University of Southern California (MA TESOL) in 2012. She is an instructor of English at American University of Kuwait.

She is fluent and has conducted research in Farsi, English and Arabic. She has translated into English chapters from a 17th-century Persian chronicle written by the Safavid historian Fazli Khuzani Isfahani. She is interested in the field of Middle Eastern literary and cultural studies.

Joseph Canton received an MFA in creative writing from Hollins University. Since then, he has worked as a freelance social media editor. His interests are poetry, short stories, and Appalachian literature.

Xiaoyu Gao is from China. She earned her MA from Eastern Illinois University in 2018. She is interested in comparative literature and biopolitics.

Emily Grigg earned her B.A. in English and political science from Presbyterian College (2003) and her MA in Shakespeare and Theatre at the University of Birmingham Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, England (2004). She also completed a MAT in Secondary English at Converse College (2006) and was a Fulbright Visiting Faculty member at Christ University in Bangalore, India (2017).

Currently Emily is the Humanities Academic Director at Spartanburg Community College where she teaches English, theatre, and humanities courses; she also teaches English at Gaffney Senior High School. Emily's scholarly interests are in Shakespeare, performance studies, and British literature.

Aaron Heinrich completed his MA at the University of Dayton (Ohio). He has taught EFL in Sudan; ESL for the University of Dayton's Intensive English Program; English literature and research writing at the University of Jordan (Aqaba branch) and EFL in Jordan; ESL and research writing for the International University of East Africa; as well as English Language Arts for grades 8-11 at Heritage International School Uganda.

James Irby earned his BA in English from Washington State University in 1996 and his M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction from Montana State University in 2012. He

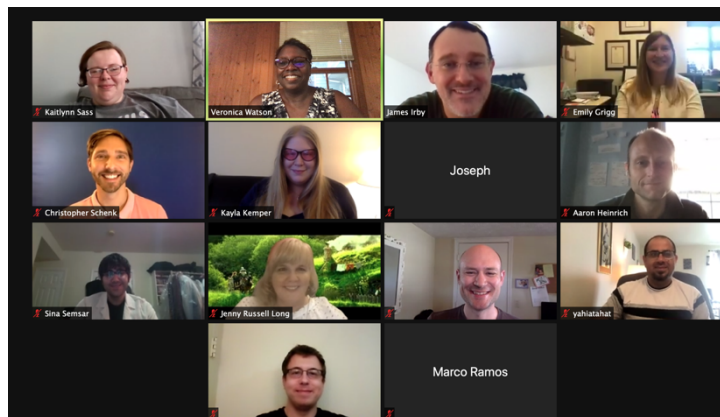
currently teaches American literature at Capital High School in Helena, Montana, the Queen City of the Rockies. His scholarly interests include Romanticism, Postmodernism, and humor.

Kayla Kemper – Kayla has been diving into academics and personal writing during the global pandemic. She completed her MA at Gannon University in 2020. While there, she presented and published several pieces to Gannon's literary journal, *Totem*, two of which were poems. She has been inducted into Sigma Tau Delta.

Jennifer Russell Long earned her MA in English Composition and Literature from IUP in 2020. She earned the 2019-2020 Outstanding Scholarship Award for a Master's Student for her MAPACA conference presentation on author Jane Webb-Loudon's 1827 novel, *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*. Her

scholarly interests include gothic, horror, science fiction, fantasy literature and film, philosophy of video game play, and global fairy tales.

Jamie Polnau earned his MA in Composition and Literature at IUP. His primary academic interests are modernism and queer theory.



Erick Marco G. Ramos has a Master's degree from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur (2016), a Bachelor's degree from the Philippine Normal University (2013) and undergraduate units from the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville (2010). He is interested in Critical Disability Studies and Contemporary Anglophone Literatures and would like to conduct research on disability intersectionality and its applications to the study, production, and teaching of literature to promote inclusion and diversity. Marco also writes short fiction and poetry. He has taught literary theory and criticism, contemporary literature, and American literature at the Philippine Normal University, the country's National Center for Teacher Education. He has also worked on various advocacy projects for various disabled people's organizations in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. His PhD studies are generously funded

by the Fulbright Foreign Student Program of the US State Department, with support from IUP.

Kaitlynn Sass earned her MA in composition and literature from IUP in 2019. She is currently the Secretary of the English Graduate Organization. Her research interests include young adult literature, cultural studies, and LGBTQIA+ studies.

Christopher Schenk earned his BA in English/Language Arts Education at Miami University (Ohio) and his MA in Liberal Studies at Georgetown University. He currently teaches at Lick-Wilmerding High School in San Francisco. His research interests include trauma and memory studies, narratology, and game studies.

Sina Semsar earned his MA from IUP in 2019. His areas of interest are French movements of the early 20th century with an emphasis on surrealism.

Allen Shull received his MA in English from Middle Tennessee State University and his M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction from Freed-Hardeman University. He teaches composition and literature at the University of Tennessee at Martin. His scholarly interests are in the interplay of human, the natural, and the supernatural, from ancient and medieval literature to contemporary science fiction.

Yahia Tahat earned a MA degree in Literature from IUP. He has presented at two conferences and was an invited speaker at the Pacific, Ancient and Modern Language Association conference in 2019. He also served as a social event coordinator for the English Graduate Organization. As part of his GA, he is working on criticism of trauma and terrorism literature (9/11 plays and novels). He has recently been invited to participate in the Arabic and World Literature conference in London, UK.

CONGRATS TO DR. MARVIN HOBSON!

Marvin Hobson was selected as the graduate Graduation Ceremony Speaker for December 2020. "I searched all over the world to find this program, and I'm grateful I did," Hobson said. The virtual Commencement ceremonies, which were held on December 12.



Interview with Dr. Kenneth Sherwood

By: Joseph Canton

Joseph Canton (JC): How did you get interested in podcasting; what was the start for you?



Kenneth Sherwood (KS): In a funny way, I would say that my interest in podcasting goes back to before podcasting was invented. I'd been interested in technology, language and audio, since my undergraduate in the late 80s, especially spoken word poetry and sound poetry. Back then, nothing was digital, we're talking

before the World Wide Web existed. People were dubbing cassettes of poetry performances. And actually, as an undergrad, I was even in a group that performed jazz poetry. Of course, when we recorded, we went into a recording studio with its analog eight tracks. So, in that sense, I guess I was primed to be interested in any intersection where literature performance, orality, voice and technology could come together.

I was a grad student when the web came online. One of my first projects along this line was an online poetry journal with a fellow graduate student in the mid-90s. At that point, there was no audio on the web because internet was basically too slow to transmit audio files. But, as that became possible, we started to share some audio files. We weren't doing podcasting yet; but, we were already thinking about how technology provides a network for circulating poetry, and especially different kinds of marginal poetry. That was what laid the groundwork for me. I was interested in orality and performance.

Some people might ask the question, how podcasting fits within English as a discipline. It might seem like it belongs in communications media, or somewhere else; and, I think they can make a claim to it as well. But for me, the connection is that notion that much of the earliest literature was poetry. Poetry is performed. It has to do with voice, we just happened to use the inscription technologies of writing, the typewriter, and printing press to capture it for hundreds of years until audio recording technology comes around. It's been a really short journey from wax cylinders and the gramophone to

MP3s, but podcasting is the way to capture poetic voices and that is my way into the field.

JC: How did you take all this passion that you have for audio and poetry readings and transform it into a podcasting course? What gave you the idea for that?

KS: Two years ago, I decided I would propose a special topics course focused exclusively on podcasting. For a couple of years, there'd be a small unit in some of my classes where I would teach students to make a podcast, one project in the context of various digital English projects having to do with the different frameworks we publish in. We would use blogs, do something on wikis, and then, sometimes, sometimes not, we'd have a little bit of time to think about audio production and podcasting as another media or format for doing our writing. But, we weren't really studying podcasts per se.

So, this course dedicated to podcasting really came about for three reasons. One, I read a book by Martin Spinelli and Lance Dann on podcasting and I realized, *Wow, there's a great framework*. I knew there were a lot of podcasts out there, but I'm not sure I was listening to enough that I could have come up with a satisfying framework for studying podcasting as a genre. I was aware of this piece and that piece of the podcasting field; but, not the whole domain. That book really helped me. Another factor was just the continued and growing popularity of podcasting. You just can't ignore this interesting phenomenon of podcasting. Lots of people are making them and lots of people are listening. So, this is worth studying. Then the third emphasis was simply Dr. Watson, saying, Hey, who has an idea for doing something different that we haven't been teaching recently. I thought that this could be something that would appeal to students in terms of thinking about how graduate study has real world public implications. Podcasting seemed to fit the bill on all three of those counts.

JC: Throughout the podcast course, you have students listen to a fairly broad spectrum of podcasts, how do you choose what podcasts to listen to?

KS: I'm pretty conscious of the fact that even if we're big podcast fans, we probably are only listening to a very

narrow slice of the pie. I listen to a podcast called Radiolab, and I'm listening to far too many political podcasts. But, like everybody who listens to podcasts, I also have some sort of niche podcasts that I listen to. I probably wouldn't say that *Slow Boat Sailing Podcast* or *Shooting the Breeze Podcast* were classic podcasts that I wanted to put on the syllabus for the class.

But that is one of the more interesting parts of teaching this class. There are moments when the students have been tasked with going out and finding a podcast to review for the class and I get surprised. That part of the class was designed to open up the breadth of what we were going to study in the class in a way that respected and reflected different students' niche interests in whatever they're curious about. This reinforces the idea that I only know a small slice of the podcast spectrum and that there's this wild variety. As students bring in more examples, our map or what we can expect from podcasts needs to be expanded and our framework addressed.



JC: Audio drama podcasts seem to be a very unique podcasting genre. You talked about that in this course. When did you discover this genre of podcasting?

KS: Well, I had not studied audio drama or radio audio drama; but I knew about them, listened to a little and read about it. When I was in school, back in the day, we would listen to LPs along with our Shakespeare reading for an English Lit survey course. As you know from our course this semester, where you live, where you grow up, determines what kind of radio you can access and that affects your exposure to audio drama. I heard a little bit of audio drama living in Buffalo New York in graduate school because we could listen to the CBC. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation isn't quite as broad as the BBC but they do different radio programming than we would typically get in the US. So, I had a little exposure to it that way. But this course has prompted me to have a renewed interest in audio drama.

JC: Do you think this class will continue to evolve? Will podcasting evolve even more?

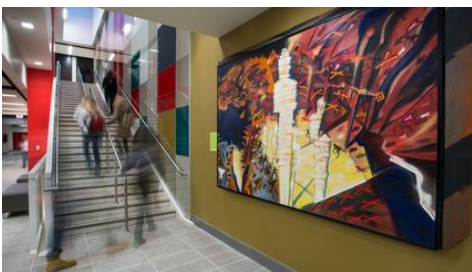
KS: I enjoy the unusual. Even though I listen to some really highly produced podcasts, established, with a

budget, the low barrier to entry in podcasting suggests there will continue to be new types of podcasts and new genres; and I'm holding out for discovering more and more things. I hope that's part of where podcasting is going, it's what I'm most intrigued by, and I assume that's going to impact a version of this class taught a year or two from now. The podcast landscape might shift a little bit or maybe a lot. I think we'd have to take that into account.

I'm also a little worried about the commercialization of podcasting. I'm concerned that as people look to figure out how to monetize it, as podcasting is becoming popular, it may actually become more homogenous; and then for me, a bit less interesting. So, we'll see whether that happens. I suspect it's going to happen to some extent. The question will just be whether the inventive, scrappy, do-it-yourself podcasters are completely squeezed out or if we still have space for inventive, niche podcasts to be made. As a class, I think we learned that one of the challenges, once you get into podcasting, is to not get trapped in your own social media bubble where the same five podcasts talk to each other and you miss other things that might be interesting. Wasn't it the *Ears Only* podcast that suggested there's a real need for curation of podcasts in the same way that we might read reviews in order to figure out what movie is worth our time?

Maybe there's a future for that in podcasting, where some critics or services step in and really help us keep our ears open to new possibilities. I've got a hundred hours of podcasts, already downloaded on my phone from the last two weeks, which I obviously haven't been able to keep up with; that is the challenge. How do you make sure that you're open to something interesting that may not be at the top of the iTunes list, but would be valuable to you?

JC: Thank you so much for sitting down and talking with me, I really appreciate it.



STUDENT & ALUMNI NEWS

Ahlam Abulaila (L&C, 4th Year) has been hired as a Teaching Assistant at IUP, teaching Composition I for the 2020-2021 academic year. Ahlam also received NeMLA Graduate Student Caucus Travel Award in December 2020 and IUP Graduate School Travel Award in November 2020. She presented a paper and was a round table presenter at the 51st Northeast Modern Language Association Convention in Boston, MA. Ahlam's two papers are: "The Right to Narrate: A Construction of the Palestinian Nation in Joe Sacco's Palestine," and "Generations of Exile and the Story of a Stolen Homeland in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin." The presentations focused on how Sacco, as an outsider, and Abulhawa, as a Palestinian writer, participate in the challenge of Palestinians and others to narrate the Palestinian story. By focusing on the Palestinian right to narrate in Sacco's Palestine and Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin, Ahlam validates the connection between the Palestinians' personal stories and the Palestinians' claim to their land. Both papers are part of Ahlam's doctoral larger project.

Najwa Ahmed (L&C, 4th Year) had a paper accepted for the 76th Annual South-Central Modern Language Association (SCMLA) Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, on 24-25 October 2019. Held before the pandemic forced conferences to go virtual, it was Najwa's first time traveling to the South. She presented, "Double Colonization and Women of Color's Education in TsiTsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition*," which focused on the connection between patriarchal oppression and colonial domination. She was also nominated for IUP's "Women's Leadership Awards Graduate Student Nominee." She was proud to accept the certificate for campus leadership, academic excellence, and community achievements in April 2020.

Aishah Alreshoud (L&C 2019) has been promoted to Assistant Professor at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University where she currently teaches courses in the novel, literary criticism and short fiction. Aishah is interested in World and Women's Literature.

Sahar Al-Shoubaki (L&C, 6th year) chaired a roundtable session titled, "Palestine Writes Back: New Forms and Genres," and presented a paper titled, "Speaking Truth to Power: Arab-American Women Intellectuals on

Freedom, Justice, and Return,” at the Northeast Modern Language Association Convention in Boston, Massachusetts. She has contributed a book chapter to the forthcoming edited collection, *Emergent Genres and Forms: Representing Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East after the Second Intifada*, which is to be released in 2021.

Kimberly Bressler (L&C, 2nd Year) serves as the English Graduate Organization’s president at IUP and is an adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown. Her research interests focus on the role of consumption within Shakespeare Studies, as well as Surrealism.

Mark DiMauro (L&C, 5th year) was hired as adjunct faculty at the University of Pittsburgh in 2020, teaching three courses in Multimedia and Digital Culture - Digital Humanities, Words and Images, and Digital Tools and Techniques. Each class has required him to use his digital humanities background and to broaden his fields to topics as varied as comics and manga to Interactive Fiction to html to Python scripting to distant reading. He has also had a number of works accepted for publication, including, “The World’s Smallest Monsters: The Threat and Reality of Pandemic Outbreak in Dystopian Fiction,” which will be included *Dystopian States of America: Apocalyptic Visions and Warnings in American Literature* (Ed. Matt Hill, ABC-CLIO, January 2021). He also had had 9 encyclopedia entries accepted for publication in the same anthology, including “Avatar: The Last Airbender,” “Black Mirror,” “Fallout,” “Mad Max,” “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,” “Neuromancer,” “Wasteland,” “Total Recall,” and “Starship Troopers.” His article, “There is No Ethos: How I Learned to Stop Entitlement and Gain Student Trust,” will be included in *Mistakes Teachers Make (And What They Learn): Advice From Veteran Teachers and Education Experts* (Ed. Julie Warner, summer 2021).



Karen Griscom (L&C 3rd year) received an IUP Graduate Student Travel Grant to present her paper on classical resonances in Wordsworth’s poetry at the annual conference of the Society for Comparative Literature and the Arts. This spring, Karen was inducted into the honor society of Phi Kappa Phi. In August, she earned a high pass for her candidacy portfolio. Although

passing candidacy was undoubtedly the summer’s pinnacle, Karen was also thrilled to participate in a summer writing group facilitated by ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830 and to work with fellow IUP students and faculty to launch the Forum for Social Understanding. Karen recently wrote two reviews for the website of the Women’s Studies Group 1558-1837, and she has submitted essays on Katherine Philips’s translation of Pierre Corneille’s *Le Mort de Pompée* and Lucy Hutchinson’s *Elegies*.

Kyeshia Jennings (L&C, 3rd Year) was the featured speaker at Research Triangle Park’s #RTP180 Virtual Event, where she presented “Healing Through Hip-Hop: The Documentation of Racial Injustice in America’s

Mythical Post-Racial Society.” She has a new bi-weekly column for the *Indy Week* called “Her Take: On Carolina Hip-Hop.” Her article “City Girls, Hot Girls and the Re-imagining of Black Women in Hip Hop and Digital Spaces” is included in the inaugural issue of the *Global Journal of Hip-Hop Studies*. Jennings was also invited to contribute a chapter to *Hip Hop Feminist Pedagogies of Renewal*, a collection of essays edited by Aisha Durham and Ruth-Nicole Brown scheduled for publication this fall. Her chapter is titled “Ratchet and Intelligent as Ever: A Critical Reading of Cardi B as a Digital Hip-Hop Feminist.” Jennings was featured on NPR’s *The State of Things* “Monday Meet” series on January 14.

Jean Paul Konda (L&C, 2015) accepted an assistant professor position at San Juan College in Farmington, New Mexico in January 2020. He is very pleased with his new experience of working with a diverse student population, which includes Native Americans from the Navajo Nation. He formerly had been an adjunct at the Community College of Allegheny County.

Tracy Lassiter (L&C, ???), assistant professor of English at UNM-Gallup, is co-organizing a conference titled “Visual Depictions of the American West” to be held in Venice, Italy in September 2021. She also plans to deliver a keynote speech at the conference titled, “Re-Visions: New Perspective of the Old West,” which will address how people see the American West and its people.

Elizabeth Laughlin (MA Composition & Literature, 2nd year) will be presenting a creative piece titled "It's Christmas Eve during a Pandemic," at the University of Maryland's virtual graduate conference. Her scholarly piece, "Coleridge and the Supernatural," will be featured first in the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism blog and she will also be contributing to IUP's weekly student organization series, published in *IUP Now*.

Len Lawson (L&C, 5th year) has been named an Assistant Poetry Editor for the online journal *Poets Reading the News* that publishes poetry about current events. He also has signed with Blair Press to co-edit a poetry and arts anthology to be tentatively released in Fall 2021 entitled *The Future of Black: Afrofuturism & Black Comics Poetry*, including the works of 50-100 poets and artists and their interpretations of Afrofuturism and people of color in comic books. In April 2020, Len received the Carrie McCray Nickens Poetry Fellowship from the South Carolina Academy of Authors. In November 2020, Len facilitated a poetry workshop entitled "Writing What Haunts" at the virtual Pat Conroy Literary Festival. The workshop prepared aspiring and emerging poets to write about hidden parts of their lives that can be difficult to express.

Lisa V. Mazey (L&C, 4th year) is the chair of a session for the Northeast Modern Language Association's March 2021 virtual conference, "History on Screen: American Historical Fiction Films and TV Shows." The session will feature papers that investigate on-screen historical fiction and examine how the stories impact their viewers. For the Spring 2021 semester, Mazey is working with IUP's Center for Teaching Excellence to create a workshop for faculty, "Multiple Literacies Promote Student Engagement and Transform Teacher Effectiveness." The workshop, which will be open to all faculty, will offer strategies to promote student engagement in online classrooms. If you have a strategy that you'd like to share, she'd love to consider it for the workshop!

Elizabeth Moser (L&C, 2nd year) will be presenting at the Nineteenth Century Studies Association's in March 2021. At the virtual conference, which has the theme "Voyages of Discovery," she will present on Francis

Watkins Harper's novel *Iola Leroy* and the importance of self-discovery prior to social activism.

Lindsey Moser (L&C, 2nd Year) is a chaplain in the USAF Reserve and serves as a minister in the Colorado Springs funeral with her husband, Andy. She had their first baby, James, in August 2020. Lindsey currently serves as the Secretary for the Moral Injury Support Network for Servicewomen, Inc., and her presentation on bibliotherapy will be published in a proceedings book in January 2021.

Reza Parchizadeh (L&C, 2018) was promoted to the position of senior language specialist at LanguageLine Solutions, the largest interpretation company in the world, where he interprets for legal, medical, financial, education, and immigration sectors, and occasionally aids COVID-19 victims. As a fully bilingual Farsi/English cultural expert with a working knowledge of Arabic, Reza has a standing offer of working for the Department of Homeland Security through the company. He was interviewed by Fox News on US foreign policy towards the Middle East, security threats originating from that region, and promotion of democracy in Iran. Reza is also widely published as a political theorist and analyst. His historical article "Iran Needs to Come Back to the West" was published by the literary journal *Harbinger Asylum*, and his philosophical/speculative article "Life in the Time of Corona" in the sociological collection *Global Pandemic Crisis*. International Jewish organizations such as Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Israel National News, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Mosaic Magazine for Advancing Jewish Thought, and Uruguay's Hebrew Weekly, widely reflected Reza's opinions on various strategic subjects such as Michel Foucault's relationship with radical Islam, Iranian infiltration of American academia, and contemporary global antisemitism. Reza introduced the term "Postmodern Jihad against the Jews" to the intellectual lexicon.

Mary Reading (L&C, 6th Year) is currently in her second year as a tenure track Assistant Professor. She has been working on establishing an online, user-friendly American Literature 2 class template. She has been accepted to NEMLA 2021 and will present, "Transgender People of Color: Representation of Transgender Women of Color in the Era of Black Lives Matter." Most of her spare time is spent working on her dissertation titled *From New Queer Cinema to Mainstream: How 21st Century Transgender*

Representation has evolved in Film and Television,” which she plans to defend in June 2021.

Brian Sateriale (L&C, 2nd Year) won the 3-Minute Thesis in spring 2020 for "Androgynism - the Attempt to Balance the Binary Forces in Human Nature." He was promoted to Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Maryland Global Campus and was elected Vice President of the English Graduate Organization.

Carl Sell (L&C, 2020) accepted an Assistant Professor position at Lock Haven University as the TRIO SSS Writing Specialist. Carl was recently published in volume 35 of *Arthurian Literature* and has had two other articles accepted for publication in separate edited collections on Arthurian literature and the DC Universe. Carl also served his final term as a Contributing Reviewer for the annual International Conference on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, MI this past year.

Rochelle Spencer (L&C, 2019) is a Visiting Assistant professor at Fisk University and Sarah Lawrence. A *Fiyah* Ignite nominee and a member of the National Books Critic Circle, Rochelle's short story collection, *Guardian Angels* (Nomadic Press) is under contract. Her recent work appears in the *Women in Higher Education*, *TriQuarterly*, and *Apogee*. Rochelle is author of *AfroSurrealism* (Routledge, 2019) and co-editor, with Jina Ortiz, of *All About Skin: Short Fiction by Women of Color*.



FACULTY NEWS

Dr. Mike Sell's *Systemic Dramaturgy: From Zeami to The Legend of Zelda* is now available from Southern Illinois University Press. He and co-author Michael Chemers of UC-Santa Cruz designed the book as a “conceptual handbook” for dramaturgs who want to better understand the complex, long-lived, and culturally diverse relationship between theatre and technology—and who want to apply their dramaturgical expertise to other interactive art forms, such as videogames. Their essay “*Sokyokuchi*: Historiographic Foundations of Systemic Dramaturgy,” will appear in this year’s volume of *Theatre History Studies*, and their essay “From Systemic Dramaturgy to Systemic Pedagogy” appears in the anthology *Teaching Critical Performance Theory in Today's*

Theatre Classroom, Studio, and Communities, just out from Routledge.

His critical study of the pioneering environmental theatre director and performance studies theorist Richard Schechner will appear in the multi-volume *Great North American Stage Directors* series, to be published by Methuen this year.

Sell continues to develop work in the interstices of videogames, literature, and theatre. He is co-editing an anthology of critical essays on the literature of videogames with Dr. Megan Amber Condis of Texas Tech University, to be published by Louisiana State University Press. *Ready Reader One: The Stories We Tell About, With, and Around Videogames* is the first scholarly book dedicated to the writing that surrounds videogames and videogame culture—novels, plays, poetry, novelizations, instruction manuals, fan fiction, and so on. His essay, “What is a Videogame Movie?” will be published in 2021 by the open-source journal *arts* in a special issue on adaptation, film, and videogames. He continues to blog on the subject at *This Professor Plays*, which can be accessed at <http://iblog.iup.edu/thisprofessorplays/>.

Sell’s interest in playful literatures extends to tabletop roleplaying games. For the last two years, he has been running two *Dungeons & Dragons* campaigns and has recently begun a third for *Call of Cthulhu*. He is writing an essay on dramaturgy and the challenges of preparing a tabletop roleplaying scenario. And he has just completed work on an original *Dungeons & Dragons* scenario. *Curse of the Sugarplum Fairy* is a holiday-themed adventure inspired by *The Nutcracker*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Adventure Time*, and *Saga*. It will be available to purchase through the *DMs Guild* website (DMsGuild.com).

Sell is the founder and leader of the Digital Storytelling Project. Since 2015, IUP undergraduate and graduate students have collaborated with Pennsylvania public school teachers to teach students how to create original interactive digital “storygames” using the open-source software program Twine. Though COVID has complicated the DSP’s mission, our work continues. If you’d like to be part of it—especially if you’re a high-school or college instructor—please contact Dr. Sell. We’d love to collaborate with you.

Dr. Kenneth Sherwood continues exploring the intersections of criticism and creative writing. With the unfortunate cancellation of the Spring PCEA conference, he was not able to deliver "Mining Words: A Multimodal Poetry Performance" (using voice, text, image, and interactive Javascript), but the quarantine has been good for poetry; he has two poetry manuscripts out for review. Students in the Spring course "Literature as a Genre: Podcasting, Narrative, Poetics, and Sound" produced some wonderful podcast episodes. He hopes some of you will continue in this genre, and that L&C podcasting might emerge as a future project for the Digital Humanities Center. Sherwood will be on sabbatical for spring 2021, which will allow him to develop an experiential travel course for the IUP Honors College. Meanwhile, he continues to serve as co-director of the Center for Digital Humanities and faculty chair of the IUP Academic Computing Policy Advisory Committee.

Dr. Todd Nathan Thompson has six peer-reviewed essays either recently published or forthcoming: 1) a digital humanities essay, titled "Viral Jokes and Fugitive Humor in the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Reprinting," forthcoming in *Studies in American Humor* in 2021; 2) a book chapter on popular comic genres, titled "Form: an Empire of Jokes in the American Age of Expansion," published in summer 2020 in the Routledge Cultural History of Comedy in Age of Empire; 3) a pedagogical essay on teaching adaptation forthcoming in the MLA's *Approaches to Teaching the Novels of James Fenimore Cooper*; 4) book reviews on early American feminist thinkers and on Lincoln in *Legacy* and *Nineteenth-Century Prose*; and 5) a contribution to the forum "Locating the Practices of Editors in Multi-Ethnic Periodicals" in the fall 2020 issue of *American Periodicals*. Thompson also gave two talks in fall 2020. At the C19: Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Biennial Conference, he delivered a presentation titled "[A] few more seminaries would finish them completely": Mark Twain, the Sandwich Islands, and the Politics of Reprinting." He gave an invited talk at the American Humor and Matters of Empire: A Quarry Farm Symposium titled "[W]e could enter into the spirit of his wit and humour": Lessons from Native Pacific Studies for American Humor Studies."

Dr. Veronica T. Watson celebrated the publication of *The Short Stories of Frank Yerby* in May 2020. The collection, five years in the making, is a recovery of

prolific, but little known 20th century African American author, Frank Yerby. Watson also had an article, "Blackness, Wartime Masculinity, and the Protest Tradition in Frank Yerby's Short Fiction," published in *Rediscovering Frank Yerby: Critical Essays*, edited by Matthew Teutsch. She was [interviewed](#) by Chicago's Eye 94 Lumpen Radio about the collection in August and was featured in [IUP Now](#).

Watson recently contributed to two Modern Language Association events. In early November she was a plenary speaker and workshop leader for the [MLA Summit for the Future of Doctoral Education](#) where she spoke on accelerating the innovation of doctoral education through co-curricular opportunities. As a workshop leader, she encouraged participating graduate humanities programs to lay the groundwork for curricular change by configuring centers, institutes and special projects as humanities labs. She argued that such experiences are particularly suited for professionalizing graduate students for careers beyond the academy. She also presented at the National Humanities Conference in mid-November as part of the Values-Driven Humanities Curriculum working group. The working group has been considering what transformations would be needed to orient doctoral education in the humanities around the values that define those fields rather than focusing almost exclusively on the content of those disciplines.

In the wake of murders of unarmed black people, Watson envisioned a literature and humanities-based training for law enforcement. The resulting pilot program, entitled Humanities Training for Law Enforcement (HTLE), is designed to expand the training that law enforcement receives related to personal bias and community policing. The HTLE is an assets-based curriculum that is built around critical reading of and dialogue about black detective fiction. The interdisciplinary team developing the project includes faculty and graduate students from Criminology, Sociology and English. L&C faculty member, Michael T. Williamson, and doctoral candidate, Taylor Jones, work with her on curriculum development. The project launched in 2021 at the IUP Police Academy and is supported by a private donation of \$20,000 from the Fleischner Family Foundation, and a partial matching donation from the IUP Office of Social Equity.

She also remains at the helm of the Frederick Douglass Institute Collaborative, and secured \$85,750 from the

400 Years of African American History National Commission to offer two high-impact programs to students throughout the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. The two programs, "I Fear for My Life," and "Let Me Read You Your Rights," employ approximately 20 undergraduate and graduate students in student/faculty research, provide presentation opportunities for them, and support participants in mentoring and facilitation experiences. Both are part of the 2020-2021 Frederick Douglass Social Justice Academy (<http://frederickdouglassinstitute.org/>), which seeks to engage students in dialogue, learning, and leadership development related to racial and social justice.

Watson is co-editing a collection entitled *I Fear for My Life: They That Mourn* with Dr. Yohuru Williams of the University of St. Thomas. The project, commissioned by the 400 Years Commission, will focus on recent cases of unarmed black people killed by police that have gained public notoriety and have been the center of significant editorializing and other public responses.

Dr. Michael T. Williamson has recently devoted himself to collaborative projects. Working with a team of faculty, administrators, and facility managers, Dr. Williamson helped to secure a \$100,000 donation to establish the IUP Dessy-Roffman Myth Collaborative, whose mission is to "work with IUP students, faculty, administrators, staff, citizens of Indiana County, and members of the Western Pennsylvania community on projects related to myth and folklore." Williamson and Dr. Melanie Holm serve as Myth Collaborative Co-Directors and Dr. Gian Pagnucci (Chair of the English Department) is a close working partner. Lindsey Moser (L&C, 2nd year) initiated and organized the first lecture series for the Myth Collaborative, at which Williamson presented an essay on representations of secularized sainthood in the works of George Herbert, James Baldwin, V.S. Pritchett, and Alice Walker. Another collaboration with Marquel Sherry (MA Literature, 2017 and current L&C 3rd year) and Dr. Harrison Wick (Library Special Collections) resulted in a publication, "Open the Gates: Ed Colker and Dave Brubeck," in *Print Matters: Selected Works from the Ed Colker Collection*, and two lectures, one on The Bomberg Bible of 1519 and another on Victorian love poetry in the Out of the Archives series. A recent collaboration on conference

presentations in Modernist Studies with L&C colleague Dr. Mike Sell should provide food for thought to share with students for years to come.

Williamson's essay, "Holocaust Poetry and Literary History: Abraham Sutzkever's Prophetic Mode of Witnessing," was published in *CEA Critic*. His paper, "Staging Nineteenth Century Jewish Literary and Religious Culture in the Face of Disaster" won the 2019 Space Between: Literature and Culture, 1914-1948 essay prize. He also presented "Troubling the Holocaust: Interwar Yiddish Literature and Literary Theory" at the British Association Modernist Studies Conference in London. He is looking forward to working on a book on Holocaust poetry during his Spring 2021 sabbatical.

Dr. Lingyan Yang presented "Asian American Magical Realism in the Americas in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest*," at the 2020 Modern Language Association (MLA) convention in Seattle. She also received IUP Senate Small Grant in to support her presentation. In June 2020 she was invited to present "Sinophobia: A Dividing Idea for the Post-Pandemic America and the World," as part of a panel titled "The Color of Life in a time of Crisis: Thinking through Racial Disparities During Covid-19." This Zoom event was sponsored by Civil Rights and Fair Housing Conference and Western New England University School of Law Center for Social Justice. The rest of the four invited panelists were scholars of law from Trinity College, Stanford University, Salem State University, Albany Law School. The national panel attracted more than 260 audience members. In early Fall 2020 Yang wrote an endorsement for Stephen J. Bell's book, *Global Migrancy and Diasporic Memory in the Works of Salman Rushdie*. Dr. Bell is an alumnus of the L&C program. His book, published in mid-Fall 2020, was revised from his dissertation on the postmodern and postcolonial novels of Salman Rushdie, which Yang directed and which won the IUP's Outstanding Graduate Student Research Award in Spring 2014. Yang was also an invited panelist for the "Into the Archives: Women Writers" event, which was organized and sponsored by Special Collections librarian Dr. Harrison Wick, Dr. Mike Williamson, and L&C doctoral students Marquel Sherry and Jamie Polnau. She presented on selected Anglophone postcolonial, Asian American, and American multiethnic women writers and comparative feminisms.

2020-21 L&C AWARD WINNERS

Outstanding Teaching Award Student

Shepard Maderer
Abby Hennon-Robinson

Outstanding Scholarship Award for a Doctoral

Lenord Lawson
Lisa Mazey

Outstanding Dissertation Award Student

Sheila Farr
Amy George
Kelly Hamren
Nick Katsiadis
Matt Loudon
Debonair Oates-Primus

Outstanding Scholarship Award for a Master's

Jenny Russell

Outstanding Service and Citizenship Award

Taylor Jones
Lindsey Moser
Kaitlin E. Tonti

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES! THESIS AND DISSERTATION TITLES

The following students successfully graduated in December 2019, May 2020, & August 2020

DECEMBER 2019:

- Asmaa Alshehri, "African American Women's Activism and Leadership: Life Writing, Films, and Social Media from 1960 to Present" (Dr. Tanya Heflin, Director)
- Christopher Burlingame, "Taming the Terrible?: Transgressive Novels, Adaptation, and the Illusion of Legitimacy" (Dr. Michael Sell, Director)
- Sheila Farr, "And They Lived Happily-Ever-After": The Seductive Narratives of Domestic Fairy Tale Adaptations in Popular Victorian Periodicals" (Dr. Tanya Heflin, Director)
- Matthew Loudon, "We're One Weird Herd: Alternative, Queer Communities in Modern Animation" (Dr. Thomas Slater, Director)
- Debonair Oates Primus, "Racialized and Gendered Madness: Decolonizing Psycho-Social Hysteria in African American and Postcolonial African Black Women's Fiction" (Dr. Lingyan Yang, Director)

MAY 2020

- Peter Faziani, "The Intrusion of Trauma in the Daily Routine: The Consequences of the Interwar, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War in Literature" (Dr. Michael T. Williamson, Director)
- Amy George, "The Construction of Mosaic Identities in Asian American and Arab American Poetry" (Dr. Lingyan Yang, Director)
- Kelly Hamren, "Я тоже мраморною стану" The Poetics of Metamorphosis in Russian Modernism Kristi Williams: Feminine Arguments From the Grave" (Dr. Michael T. Williamson, Director)
- Jemayne King, "The Soles of Black Folk: African American Sneaker Culture and its Influence in Literature, Film, Television, Sports Studies, and Music" (Dr. Michael Sell, Director)
- Carl Sell, "Recontextualizing the Once and Future King: Arthurian Appropriations from *Historia Brittonum* to *Aquaman* and Beyond" (Dr. Christopher Kuipers, Director)
- Andrew Smith, "What Do Manga Depict? Understanding Contemporary Japanese Comics and the Culture of Japan" (Dr. Christopher Kuipers, Director)
- Rodney Taylor, "Writing Back: Anti-Plantation Literature in the Reconstruction South, 1865-1905" (Dr. Todd Thompson, Director)

DECEMBER 2020

- Treasure Redmond, “She Cuts a Heroic Figure” (Dr. Kenneth Sherwood, Director)
- Beshaiyer Alqahtani, “Representing Black Women’s Activism: Understanding Social Change through Autobiographical Narrations of the Civil Rights Era” (Dr. Veronica Watson, Director)
- Lisa Elwood-Farber, “What Shall I Do”: Divine Inspiration and Vocational Calling in Nineteenth Century Women’s Fiction (Dr. Michael T. Williamson, Director)
- Marvin Hobson, “Repairers of the Breach: Representations of the Possessed Body and Neo-Ethnic Identity in the Works of Hurston, Ansky, Soyinka, and Perry” (Dr. Michael T. Williamson, Director)
- Julie Ann Pavlick, “Exposing the Theft of Motherhood Through Social Reproduction Theory and Critical Ecofeminism in 20th Century Women’s Literature” (Dr. Susan Comfort, Director)
- Jirayu Sinsiri, “Farming as Resistance: Women Farmers in Contemporary Ecofeminist and Global Women’s Writing” (Dr. Susan Comfort, Director)

DATES TO REMEMBER

Spring 2021

Candidacy Portfolio:	March 16, 2021
MLK Holiday: No Classes:	January 18, 2021
Classes Begin:	January 19, 2021
May Graduation Application Due:	April 30, 2021
Last Day of Spring Classes:	May 3, 2021
Final Exams:	May 4, 2021
Commencement:	May 8, 2021

Future Dates for Planning 2021

Pre-Session:	May 24-28, 2021
Summer Session 1 Classes:	May 31-June 25, 2021
Summer Session 2 Classes:	July 5-30, 2021
Fall 2021 Classes Begin:	August 23, 2021

APPLICATION DEADLINES

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

- For summer: November 15, January 15 for early decision or March 15 for second round.
- For fall semester: November 15, 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.

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