



## DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

# NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2019-2020

## Annual Homecoming event honors alumni

*By John Moody*

On October 27, during Homecoming Week, the Department of English hosted its sixth annual Distinguished Alumni Awards ceremony and luncheon, held in the Founders Suite at Bone Student Center. Two former students were honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award, and another former student was honored with the inaugural Rising Alumni Award.

Distinguished Alumni Award winners were Will Banks, director of the University Writing Program at East Carolina University (ECU); and D. Leigh Henson, longtime English teacher at Pekin Community High School and professor emeritus of English at Missouri State University, Springfield. The Rising Alumni Award went to Adriene Galindo, rare visual materials catalog librarian at Boston Athenæum.

“The Department of English at ISU takes great pride in counting among its alumni such distinguished citizens of the world as Will Banks, Leigh Henson, and Adriene Galindo,” Professor Christopher De Santis, chair of the Department of English, said of the three honorees. “Professors Banks and Henson have excelled in careers in higher education, and in her early career, Ms. Galindo has wonderfully demonstrated part of the range of possibilities that a degree in English can open up to students.”

### Will Banks

Will Banks, Ph.D. '03, a native of Moxley, Georgia, was shopping Ph.D. programs when he decided on Illinois State University.

“I knew that I wanted one that cared enough about teaching that real passion for teaching and concern for students was built in the program itself,” Banks recalled. “I wanted a program that wouldn't confine me to just one part of English Studies, and ISU delivered beautifully.”

He made a visit to campus in the spring of 1999 and one of the first people he met was then-director of the writing center, Julia Visor, who welcomed his unexpected visit by chatting for over an hour about his interests. A few weeks later Banks met several Illinois State English faculty members and graduate students at a conference, and he was convinced.

“It offered exciting course work, a broad English Studies education, and a commitment to teaching and teacher research that I thought would prepare me to be a professor,” he said.

Banks has been at ECU since 2003 and has been director of the writing program since 2012. He helped oversee the creation of a new \$750,000 writing center, and he still teaches in a doctoral program. Since 2008 he's helped lead an annual London study abroad program, which he said he's most proud of.

Banks has maintained friendships he made during his time in Normal. And, the lasting influence of “teacher-scholars” at Illinois State remains strong.

“I'm really honored and touched by this award,” Banks said. “Being recognized by the English department as an outstanding alumnus honors their investment in me all those years ago.”



Will Banks (left) and Professor Emerita Jan Neuleib

### Message from the chair

*By Christopher De Santis, chair,  
 Department of English*

This past year was one of transitions for the Department of English. Maggie Morris Davis began serving as director of English Education following Lisa Thetard's retirement; Jennifer Renchen accepted



Department Chair  
 Chris De Santis

the position of clinical instructor and coordinator of clinical experiences in English Education upon Linda Lienhart's retirement; and Professor Danielle Lillge joined the faculty in English Education.

In the area of Publishing Studies, we welcomed Professor Ela Przybylo, and in the area of Technical Writing and Rhetorics, we welcomed Professor Barbi Smyser-Fauble. Professor Joyce Walker stepped down as director of the Writing Program after a decade of outstanding service in the role, and we welcomed Professor Rachel Gramer to serve as the new director.

In the area of Children's Literature, Professor Karen Coats retired (to accept an exciting new position at the University of Cambridge!) after 21 years; in the area of Linguistics, Professor Susan Burt retired after 22 years; and in the area of Literary and Cultural Studies, Professor Cynthia Huff retired after 30 years.

We wished Amy Tellor, our office support specialist, well in her new position in the College of Education. And

sadly, we grieved the passing of Professor Joan Crooks on June 20, 2019. Joan earned the M.S. in writing at ISU in 1988 and served as instructional assistant professor in the Department of English for 22 years. She was an accomplished poet and teacher, and she was recognized by ISU students with an Impact Award in 2017.

After six years as chairperson of the Department of English and four years as Graduate Program director, I will be on a sabbatical leave during the 2019-2020 academic year and will return to the role of chair in mid-May 2020. It is with deep gratitude that I welcome Professor Ricardo Cruz to the role of acting chair in my absence. An outstanding teacher, mentor, and writer, Professor Cruz will bring his 20 years of experience at ISU to this role and provide exceptional leadership to an exceptional department.

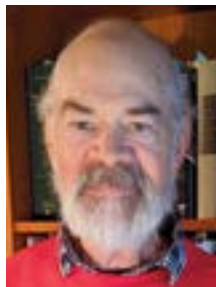
It is a true pleasure to share with alumni and other friends of the department some of the recent accomplishments of our students, faculty, and alumni. Readers of this year's newsletter will note the multifaceted approach to the discipline we practice at ISU, the social justice implications of so much of our work, and the ways in which the department's commitment to diversity—of languages and literatures, of modes of writing, of peoples and cultures—resonates in our teaching, learning, and communication of new knowledge to constituencies well beyond Stevenson Hall.

## Department of English Newsletter

Issue 7 • Winter 2019–2020

Christopher C. De Santis, chair  
Libby Harness, office manager  
Charles Woods, editorial assistant

[English.IllinoisState.edu](http://English.IllinoisState.edu)



## D. Leigh Henson

D. Leigh Henson '64, M.S. '69, D.A. '82, originally from nearby Lincoln, earned three degrees from Illinois State's Department of English. He spent three decades teaching high school English in Pekin. During that time he also taught composition part time at Illinois Central College. He then taught technical communication at Missouri State University for 14 years.

In 1990 Henson was a founding partner of Technical Publication Associates, Inc. As a professor at Missouri State, he published articles on the theory, practice, and teaching of technical communication in several academic journals. His writing about author and fellow Lincoln native William Maxwell and an article about an 1858 Abraham Lincoln speech at Lincoln both appeared in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*. He's written two books: *The Town Abraham Lincoln Warned: The Living Namesake Heritage of Lincoln, Illinois* (2011); and *Inventing Lincoln: Approaches to His Rhetoric* (2017).

He picked Illinois State as an undergraduate because of a state teacher scholarship, for the University's solid reputation for preparing teachers, and due to its proximity to his family.

"My ISU degrees in English gave me the knowledge and skills to fulfill a succession of career goals from the age of the card catalog to the digital/Internet age, including the use of social media to distribute my research," Henson said. "My time at ISU taught me that in addition to subject matter expertise, patience and kindness are essential to good teaching and all other communication."

In 2011, he was awarded membership in the Illinois Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Library of Congress. He is an elected member of the Society of Midland Authors. And, his Illinois State Distinguished Alumni Award is not the first of its kind that he's received. In 2012, he was named "most distinguished alumnus" of his hometown's elementary schools. This recognition from Illinois State adds perspective to a career journey that is ongoing.

"I am especially gratified that retirement has enabled me to publish books and refereed journal articles in Lincoln studies while enjoying the outdoors and the love and support of family," Henson said.

## Adriene Galindo

Adriene Galindo '13 is rare visual materials catalog librarian at Boston Athenæum. A Rockford native, Galindo has lived in Boston for five years. She chose Illinois State in part because of the classes she could take if she came to school here.

"I had my heart set on attending a much smaller school," Galindo said. "Then I saw the English department's list of course offerings, and my eyes got real big and round, like a cartoon character."

She felt she'd be missing out if she didn't come here. She was right since her teachers at Illinois State thoroughly prepared her for the future and served as both mentors and professors.

"Especially Julie Jung, Hilary Justice, and Tim Hunt, who challenged and encouraged me every step of the way," she said. "I'm very grateful to them for their dedication to their students and passion for their subjects."

She moved to Boston to pursue a master's degree at Simmons College in library and information science and archives management. She took internships at a public library, in the archives of one of the oldest cemeteries in the country, and at her eventual employer the Boston Athenæum. She also worked at a community college library and experienced nearly all aspects of librarianship before finding her "home in cataloging rare materials."

An internship her senior year in Milner Library's special collections library was a key moment. Her supervisors Maureen Brunsdale and Mark Schmitt taught her that stories are waiting to be told in archives and special collections libraries.

"But someone has to make them findable and accessible," Galindo said. "And that's what I do as a librarian."

Being honored with the Rising Alumni Award caused her to reflect on the opportunities she's had since graduating from Illinois State.

"I am so honored to be recognized in this way," Galindo said.



Adriene Galindo (left) and Professor Julie Jung

## New Faculty Member Spotlight

### Welcome to ISU Professor Rachel Gramer, Professor Ela Przybylo, and Jennifer Renchen

#### Professor Rachel Gramer

Professor Rachel Gramer has learned from a handful of brief lives before coming to ISU, including being a writing program administrator at Eastern Michigan University, teaching at a public high school and a two-year college in central Florida, working in tourism, publishing, and editing in Orlando, and even being an MFA-seeking poet in Boston. She spent her time as a doctoral student at the University of Louisville trying to perform feminist activist work across domains of scholarly activity—in ways that she could also articulate and make legible to folks across disciplines (like first-year students) and beyond the academy (like her family).



Some of this work is visible in Gramer's publications: about girls' language and digital design (*Computers and Composition Online*), women "making it" in academia (*College English*), digital writing and identity (*Kairos*), responsive research stances (*JAC*), normed disciplinary discourses (*Writing for Engagement*), and methodological alignment and innovation (*Making Mobility Work*). Much of this work is also largely invisible, ephemeral, hinted at in community project titles where she worked collaboratively with other researcher-activists, middle school girls, individuals with developmental disabilities, and writing teachers: like the U of L Digital Media Academy, Art as Memory, Nothing about Me without Me, and the Digital Composition Colloquium.

So far, across research and administrative projects, Gramer's core commitments remain: narrative, feminist methodologies and pedagogies, new writing teacher preparation, digital composition and pedagogies, and feminist writing program administration. At least that's one story she's telling. As a feminist, she is committed to asking questions about the stories we tell often and those we don't tell often enough—as teachers, as a field, as learners, as social groups in positions of constantly shifting power. Who benefits from this story? Who believes it—and why? What material and discursive structures support this story? How did it come to be, and how is it taken up both in and over time?

As the new director of the Writing Program at ISU, Gramer is excited to see and trace how her story unfolds, how it interrelates with the stories playing out in ISU's writing program, and how both stories are changed in the process. She is encouraged by the program's strong alignment between learning theories, literate activity, and pedagogical action in P-CHAT. In her first year, she is especially looking forward to learning more in-depth about how the program works, who instructors and undergraduate writing students are (and who they want to be), and how we might continue to improve structures of support for all folks in the program. As a teacher and researcher, she is already energized at the thought of joining a stellar group of rhetoric, composition, and technical communication faculty who are active in the field and whose work she admires. She is also hopeful about collaborating with everyone in the department who also wants to learn from, and ask questions emerging from, the perspectives and experiences of scholars of color and feminist, queer, and indigenous scholars.

Continued on page 4

#### Retiring Faculty

#### Professor Susan Burt



Susan Burt received her Ph.D. in 1986 from the University of Illinois with her dissertation titled "Empathy and Indirect Quotation in Japanese." Before joining the faculty at ISU as an assistant professor in English in 2000, she served in the same role at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh from 1995-2000, and as an adjunct assistant professor of English and adjunct instructor of English at ISU and Illinois Wesleyan University.

Burt published prolifically throughout her career, including a bevy of articles, book chapters, and a monograph, *The Hmong Language in Wisconsin: Language Shift and Pragmatic Change*, in 2010. Selected publications include, "Solitudes in American English," published in the *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* in 2003, and the book chapter, "'There's Not a Lot of Negotiation': Address Terms in an Academic Department," in 2015.

In 2005, Burt was awarded the College Outstanding Service Award (Humanities) by ISU's College of Arts and Sciences. Burt also has a long record of service to the ISU English Department by serving on numerous committees, including stints as member of the Graduate Committee and the Academic Freedom, Ethics and Grievance Committee. Burt also assisted as the English Department representative, and member of the Executive Committee, for the ISU Institutional Review Board.

Continued on page 4

What's next for Burt? She is settling into life as a freelance person. She retired "so I could spend more time with my bicycle," but she is also swimming at the Student Fitness center, planting fruit trees in her garden—and doing various other kinds of gardening—and spending time with grandchildren, ages 7, 4, and 1. Burt continues to serve on graduate student committees and as a referee for the *Journal of Pragmatics*. Her chapter "Person-Referring expressions, Reference Nominals and Address Nominals: Information in an Illinois Neighborhood Social Group" is scheduled to be published in *It's Not All About You: New Perspectives on Address Research* in October. We wish Professor Burt well in her retirement.

### Professor Karen Coats



Professor Karen Coats knew she was extremely fortunate to be joining the strongest program in children's and young adult literature in the world when she came to ISU in 1998. Not only that, but with her interdisciplinary degree in human sciences from The George Washington University, she felt at home in an English Studies program where the faculty and students actively pose questions of how our various ways of using language and image work together to invest our world with meaning. As her classes in children's and young adult literature offered opportunities to explore with undergraduate and graduate students the forms and genres of poetry, storytelling, film, picture books, nonfiction, and fiction for different age groups, Coats developed a broad and robust research and publication record

### Professor Ela Przybylo

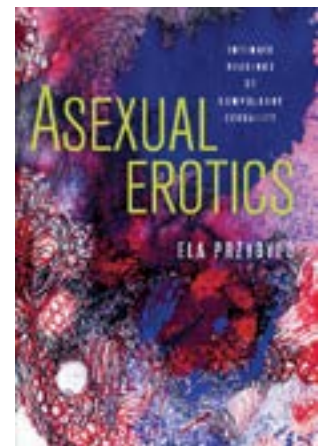
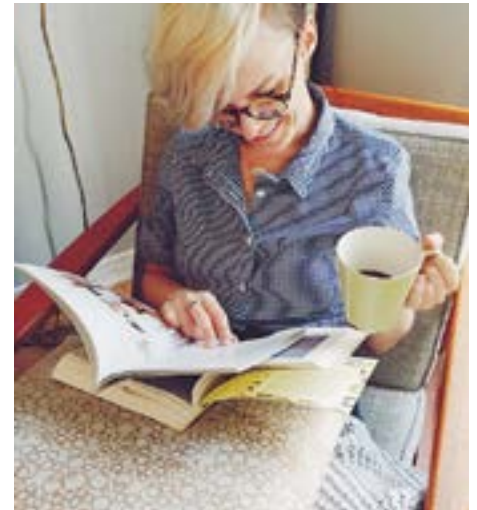
Professor Ela Przybylo is delighted to be joining the Department of English. As an assistant professor, Przybylo will develop courses and research at the intersections of publishing studies, queer and trans studies, and gender studies. Prior to joining ISU, Przybylo was the Ruth Wynn Woodward Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and visiting assistant professor in Women and Gender Studies at Arizona State University. She holds a Ph.D. in Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies from York University.

Przybylo is the author of *Asexual Erotics: Intimate Readings of Compulsory Sexuality* (Ohio State University Press, August 2019), which draws on asexuality studies and Audre Lorde's pivotal articulation of the erotic to affirm asexuality as a sexual orientation that transforms our ideas around desire and relating in queer, feminist, lesbian, and trans contexts. She is also the co-editor of the collection *On the Politics of Ugliness* (Palgrave, 2018).

Committed to increasing the visibility of asexual communities, knowledges, and identifications in feminist and sexuality scholarship, Przybylo has published articles and book chapters, including in journals such as *GLQ* and *Sexualities*. In spring 2019, she co-organized "Unthinking Sex, Imagining Asexuality," a major inaugural conference on asexuality in Vancouver where she was an active member of the Vancouver Ace/Aro community group. Przybylo also taught "Critical Nonsexualities," one of the first ever courses on asexuality during her time at SFU. Presently, Przybylo is co-editing a special issue of *Feminist Formations* on intersectional approaches to the erotics of sexuality.

Building on a rich genealogy of feminist presses and journal makers (such as the Kitchen Table Press), Przybylo is a founding co-editor of the online, intermedia, open access, intersectional, and peer-reviewed journal *Feral Feminisms*. Through work on the journal, Przybylo has been involved in thinking about labor in the service of knowledge production, the role and limitations of open access for knowledge communities, and the radical collaborative histories of feminist journal making. This fall, Przybylo will collaborate with a team of librarians, students, and researchers at the Triangle Scholarly Communication Institute to think about "The Labor of Open."

At ISU, Przybylo is looking forward to collaborating with peers, colleagues, students, and the broader community in Normal-Bloomington. In the fall she will teach ENG 260—History of Literature by Women, which will focus on personal voice in queer and trans writing and which will include zine and podcast making and collaboration with the McLean County Museum of History, as well as ENG 253—Introduction to Histories and Theories of Publishing, which will look at the histories and theories of publishing with a focus on queer, trans, feminist, antiracist, and decolonial publishing communities and projects. She also looks forward to contributing to the community through helping to organize queer, trans, and feminist events, lectures, and workshops. She hopes to develop a retreat for feminist journal editors in order to collectively think on questions of best practice, labor, precarity, and conflict.



## Jennifer Renchen

Jennifer Renchen taught secondary English for nine years, first at Rantoul Township High School, then at Normal Community West High School. Although she loved teaching at the secondary level, Renchen is excited to be a member of the English Department at her alma mater. At ISU, she found faculty and staff who were committed to helping students develop both content knowledge and discipline-specific pedagogy, and she hopes that she can support future educators on their journeys. Renchen's areas of research interest include teacher identity, secondary English teacher preparation, young adult literature, and socially just English Language Arts instruction.



## Uptake Interview: A retrospective with former Writing Program director Professor Joyce Walker

By Charles Woods

Spring 2019 was the final semester Professor Joyce Walker served as director of the Writing Program at ISU. Walker spent a decade at the helm of an ISU writing program that was awarded the Conference on College Composition and Communication Writing Program Certificate of Excellence in 2015, published the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*, its own student-content centered journal, and advanced a pedagogical framework, P-CHAT, designed to get students to consider the ways in which they are writers and researchers working in the world. I sat down with Walker this summer to discuss her last decade as the Writing Program director and her plans as she joins the faculty. Of course, we wish Professor Walker well in all of her future endeavors.

*When did you come to ISU and what drew you to this place?*

I specifically came here to ISU because of the position for the Writing Program director, which opened up in 2008 (I started in 2009). My colleague Cheryl Ball, who was a faculty member at ISU, reached out to me regarding the position opening, so I applied. At the time I was the Writing Program director at Western Michigan University. What drew me to the position was the strong history of attention to composition and writing studies that the English Studies program at ISU has maintained for decades, as well as the focus on education throughout the entire University. I felt sure that my interest in a research-and-theory based approach to literacy acquisition would be supported here. In addition, when I visited campus I found that colleagues across a range of areas had a lot of interest in writing and literacy studies. And that has turned out to be true. Colleagues in creative writing, children's literature, linguistics and other areas have really helped to broaden my interests and have also shaped my understanding of literacy acquisition and learning.



that combined literary and cultural theory with an eye toward how these texts serve to apprentice children's aesthetic tastes as well as their ideologies.

Coats' first book, *Looking Glasses and Neverlands: Lacan, Desire, and Subjectivity in Children's Literature*, grew out of her dissertation, but was refined for publication with a voice she developed to speak clearly to undergraduates about difficult theoretical and philosophical concepts without reducing their complexity. She was delighted (and a little confused) when a person from Iceland sent her a song she had written that was inspired by this book of literary criticism. Early in her career at ISU, she also began writing reviews of new children's and young adult books for the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She brought her awareness of these new books and trends into her teaching and research, developing a specialty in contemporary literature for young people to complement the historical foci of her colleagues Mary Moran, Nathalie op de Beeck, Jan Susina, Anita Tarr, and Roberta Seelinger Trites (though of course all of these colleagues also study and teach contemporary books as well!). While at ISU, she published over 40 peer-reviewed articles, three single-authored books, and three co-edited collections, with a fourth to appear in 2020; as a result, she has received Outstanding College and University Researcher awards. She has directed and/or served on the thesis and dissertation committees of over 40 U.S. and international graduate students, mentored visiting scholars from China and Russia, and delivered invited lectures in Stockholm, Thailand, Taiwan, China, Russia, and the UK. Coats also served as English Education director for four years, chaired the committee that developed the Children's Studies minor, and served on various department, college, and university committees.

Coats' retirement from ISU was unexpected. She was elected to a professorship of Education at the University of Cambridge, where she will serve as

*Continued on page 6*

*Continued on page 6*

director of the Cambridge Centre for Research in Children's Literature. She acknowledges that this "third act" of her career would not have been possible without the support and mentoring of her colleagues, especially Roberta Seelinger Trites, and the opportunities afforded her by the English Department and the excellent program in children's literature at ISU. We wish Professor Coats well in her future endeavors.

### Professor Cynthia Huff

Cynthia Huff joined the faculty at Illinois State in 1989 as an assistant professor in the English Department and as director of Women's Studies. She has served as graduate program director in English, been appointed to the Department Faculty Status Committee, the department council, the University Review Committee,



several departmental job search committees, advised numerous students at all stages of their respective careers, directed 13 completed dissertations, 11 master's theses, several undergraduate honors theses, 26 in-class honor's projects as well as numerous independent studies and served on many additional thesis and dissertation committees at the graduate and undergraduate level. Highlights of her career are her extensive and gratifying work with students, especially graduate students, her receipt of the department's Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award and the College of Arts and Science Outstanding Researcher award, both in 2015, her 2017 keynote address at the Convention and Revolution

### *What were your goals for the writing program?*

I had a couple of what I felt were important goals: (1) I wanted to continue and expand the work I'd been doing at Western Michigan, to consider how socio-cultural theories of writing studies could be practically applied to writing instruction. This is a very different approach than what is common in more traditional writing programs. It's more focused on multiple literacies, and on people's resources, not just for learning about writing, but for actively using that evolving knowledge to develop more adaptive literacy skills and practices. (2) In addition, I think many writing programs, especially those that use adjunct and/or graduate student instructors, tend to have a very hierarchical model of instruction. That is, they are built on understandings of "expertise" and "writing requirements" that are developed often outside of even the Writing Program director's direct control, and these understandings are used to shape curriculum, often with little input from instructors. Instructors then, must claim expertise only within that system, and usually they are seen more as conduits of specific versions of writing knowledge, rather than as makers of knowledge or as members of a community whose goal is to study, understand, and teach a range of writing skills and practices, often in conjunction with students participating in the classes. So, another goal I had was to develop an approach to Writing Program administration using a more "flat-hierarchy" organizational model. And even more than just an organization practice, I wanted to help to build a community that would understand writing to be something that every literate person has the right and obligation to investigate.

### *What are the moments of which you are most proud?*

I'm very proud of the evolution of the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*. Not just how the articles themselves have evolved as models of the everyday study of literate practice, but the way members of the Writing Program have used the journal to expand students' understanding of their own and others' literacies. In addition, I'm always proud of the instructors who work in the program and of the folks we've had working as staff members over the years. We've had multiple visitors to our program remark in surprise how collegial they find our program and how rare it is for a writing program to be able to bring graduate students and undergraduate students together in discussions of writing literacies. The evolving strengths of the program have been so much a product of that atmosphere—that because we all write, we can all discuss what it means to learn to write—but that no one way of understanding writing or one particular kind of textual production can be understood as intrinsically more valuable.

### *What are some of the hurdles you faced? Was one hurdle greater than the others?*

I think the one consistent hurdle that reoccurs as students and instructors move into, through and out of the program is that our model for understanding and practicing writing literacies is not the model that most people learn in school. This is as true for entering first-year students as it is for new instructors. So often folks have been taught various myths about "good writing, and this makes it difficult for them to take on a more expansive view. They need time to move through a process of resisting, challenging and ultimately adapting aspects of our model that work most successfully for them. And as our program has developed, I think it has become more difficult for us (staff and experienced instructors) to be patient with the process of people struggling to come to terms with a more nuanced view of literacy and writing skills. We know that our model leads to expanding thinking, so we have our own hurdles to face in recognizing that as new students and teachers enter the program we need to give them the same kinds of time, space to discuss, and opportunity to explore that we needed as we learned the process. I know that I am definitely guilty of being impatient with the time folks often need to internalize our models for teaching and learning about writing.

### *What was your goal in creating and developing some of the Writing Program programs, like the Professional Literacies Project?*

Over the years the staff of the Writing Program has tried many different ways to develop new resources that instructors in our program, and potentially in other writing programs, can

use to teach more expansive and complex understandings of what writing is and does in the world. Some ideas have been “failures,” in that instructors and students don’t seem to find them useful, but other ideas have proved very successful and are included on our website. My personal favorite ideas, in addition to the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* as a learning resource, have been projects that offer narratives about different kinds of writing and literacy experiences, like the Professional Literacies Projects, where we bring people who work in all kinds of different jobs into the program to talk about how their literate practice has had to adapt and expand in order to be successful. The idea behind these projects is to offer both teachers and students the chance to see more clearly how the model of paragraph-based essay writing (the one most commonly taught as a “school” literacy) needs to expand and adapt to include all kind of different practices—including multimodal tools and multiple languages. I’ve also been happy with some of the specific handouts, videos, and other resources we’ve created to explain important program concepts. In particular, I’ve enjoyed the work that we’ve done to consider the concepts of translanguaging and transcultural approaches to literacy and writing instruction.

*What are the intangibles you want people to know about this program and your time in the role as Writing Program director?*

Writing is so much bigger, so much more important, and potentially so much more exciting when we stop thinking of “writing instruction” as a narrowly defined conduit for imparting specific, non-flexible writing knowledge. Asking students to write endless paragraph-based argumentative essays that don’t move beyond a simple student-instructor communicative model is not just an ineffective way to investigate and acquire new literacies, it actually can retard student thinking and writing development. And while I’m not saying that our program has some kind of magic bullet answer to what makes people functionally literate in all situations, I think we’ve done a great job of expanding the discussion and exploring what knowledge might be important for a wide range of literate activities. I think our idea is that in the process of becoming “writing researchers” people can gain thinking and analytical skills that can improve their ability to enter and engage with new literate practices and genres. And I think that this “writing researcher” perspective can actually benefit instructors and students equally.

*Going forward, in what ways might you still be connected to the Writing Program?*

I hope to maintain my editorship of the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* and work to expand its reach beyond our program. I hope to serve as a resource for our new Writing Program director, Rachel Gramer. I’m really excited to see what new ideas she’s going to bring to the program, so I hope she’ll continue to include me. Helping instructors and students work together to think about what they know as writers, and what they want and need to learn about writing is an activity I hope to always be a part of, both here in our program and in the field more generally as well.

*What are your plans going forward?*

I’m working on several articles currently, and hopefully a book project, that describe our “socio-cultural” approach to writing instruction, with a goal of helping instructors in other Writing Programs to adopt, and adapt, this more complex approach in their own programs. I’m also working on some texts related to non-school literacy practices, particularly using socio-cultural theories like CHAT, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, and actor-network theory to unpack how people are situated within complex relationships of tools, social settings, environmental influences, and antecedent and acquired knowledge as they compose.

*What new goals do you have as a faculty member?*

To publish more, and also to work on the development of our department’s M.A. program in the teaching of writing. I’m also looking forward to working more with Professor Bob Broad on the National Writing Project, and just generally participating in a more diverse set of activities within the department, rather than focusing primarily on the Writing Program.

Conference in Warsaw, Poland, and the opportunity as director of Women’s Studies to hire as speakers many influential feminist scholars and activists, including Angela Davis, Betty Friedan, and Marge Piercy. While at ISU, she completed the book, *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essay on Women’s Diaries and Imagined Communities* as well as virtually all the work on the special issue, “Engaging Donna Haraway: Lives in the Natureculture Web,” slated to be published by *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* in fall 2019 and later as a book by Routledge. She is currently on the editorial board of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* and *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* and the Senior Advisory Board of the Midwest Victorian Studies Association.

Professor Huff has especially appreciated how the Graduate Program’s English Studies model has allowed her to make meaningful and stimulating connections among branches of her own rather diverse research interests which encompass women’s writing, life narrative, Victorian Studies, animal studies and posthumanism, among others. She has also been grateful for the ways in which the English Studies model has allowed her graduate students to make suggestive scholarly connections and given her the opportunity to work with colleagues in areas outside her specialties. Her future projects include continuing to conduct research, working with graduate students, showing and breeding standard poodles internationally, and, finally, determining the contents of her house, which she has not been sure of for over 20 years.

The English Department at Illinois State University wishes Professor Cynthia Huff well in her retirement.

### **Linda Lienhart**

Linda Lienhart joined the English Department at ISU as a supervisor of student teachers in spring 2006 after teaching English at Bloomington High School for 32 years. She received her B.S.E.D. and her M.S. in English with emphasis in the Teaching of Writing from ISU. Her master’s thesis, titled, “The High School

*Continued on page 8*

English Teacher's Obligation to Teach Grammar," was completed in 1994.

Lienhart became the coordinator of student teaching for English in fall 2007,



a position she held until her retirement in spring 2019. She managed the student teaching program and taught a variety of courses, including ENG 296—The Teaching of Literature, ENG 297—The Teaching of Writing, and ENG 244—Applied Grammar and Usage for Writers. Lienhart especially enjoyed working with the English Education faculty and staff as they collaborated to guide teacher candidates through the English Education sequence.

During her time as an instructor working in secondary and higher education, Lienhart was active in many writing studies-based projects. In 1984, she participated in the NEH Grant project to develop materials for teaching writing with Professor Emerita Janice Neuleib and Professor Emeritus Ron Fortune. Lienhart also took part in the National Writing Project from 1994-1999, including for the Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles, California, in 1999, and served as a faculty consultant/AP workshop leader for the College Board from 1998-2006.

Lienhart was awarded the Sigma Tau Delta Faculty Appreciation Award three times, in 2008, 2012, and 2018, and earned the Excellence Award for Outstanding Teaching by an Administrative Professional from the College of Arts and Sciences in 2013. While she will miss working in the English Department, she looks forward to spending more time with her two granddaughters and new baby grandson. Plus, she will have more time to play tennis and cook. We wish Linda well in her retirement.

## Professor Rachel Gramer takes an active learning approach to Writing Program administration

By Charles Woods

Fall 2019 will mark the first semester that Professor Rachel Gramer operates as the Writing Program director at ISU. Gramer joins the faculty at ISU after serving as a writing program administrator (WPA) at Eastern Michigan University for two years. I sat down with Gramer this summer to discuss her future plans for the ISU Writing Program, including her approach to her new role, the importance of equity in her pedagogy and her administration, her interests in student professional development opportunities and community-based writing projects, and, of course, her dog, Benson.



*What drew you to ISU? And, since you have been here, what have you found interesting, compelling, exciting about the University and the community?*

I don't know enough yet because it is summer. So far it has been quiet, with few students, but great staff interactions. Since I lived in Illinois until age 7, moving to Illinois is like coming back to a home I have never known as an adult. I am drawn to ISU's deep valuing of teaching and research without privileging one over the other. A commitment to teaching is a privilege that some institutions don't spend enough resources on, since structures of support in higher education tend to privilege research culture. People care about teaching, of course, but it often gets placed secondary to research; and from my first interactions with English department faculty and grad students, I got a strong sense that teaching matters deeply at ISU.

*When you were on your campus visit, you mentioned equity as a component foundational to your scholarship, your pedagogy, and your administration. In what ways will ISU Writing Program students and instructors see equity in action during your time as WPA?*

One of my aspirations is to draw on theories and perspectives from people who are not the same as me, or who do not emerge from dominant groups in power. As a queer white feminist, I can bring my experience and perspectives, but we need to think collectively about and from other positionalities as well. As Jenny Korn (@JennyKorn) says, "Cite people of color when you can—and you always can." Diversity, equity, and inclusion are multiple frameworks that together consider how we have actively been exclusive to vulnerable and under-represented populations; and white scholars in particular need to participate in changing academic cultures of exclusion and marginalization.

I am also committed to questions of accessibility and legibility, especially since we work with newcomers, both undergraduate students and graduate student teachers. Drawing on disability studies, I'd like us to think explicitly about access and enact more accessible practices as a program. How can we be more accessible to students, instructors, and other folks we work with and for? One of the benefits of being a new director is that I bring in a different set of eyes on normed program practices. How accessible are our learning spaces and structures of support? While I am not sure yet of the concrete ways we can be more accessible—I need to see things in action—some ideas that I've seen enacted in the past include introducing new instructors to student services personnel, encouraging instructors to write their own disability statements for their courses, in addition to any mandatory institutional statement, building relationships so that students are comfortable voicing struggles, with mental health, for example, and designing professional development opportunities focused on specific issues of access, diversity, inclusion, and equity.



*Could you talk a bit about your commitment to community writing projects, how those projects impact your vision for ISU and your plan for promoting community writing projects in ISU Writing Program classrooms?*

I know there is great community work already been done here at ISU. One of the biggest problems with academic culture is that academics are forced to move around a lot to do something radical—like make a living wage. To do a community writing project, you have to live in a community, get to know people, earn their trust, and learn what they identify as problems or needs in their community, not just rely on your own academic expertise. In my previous experiences in other states and institutions, community literacy projects have begun with support from faculty who live there. Then, as graduate students, we got out into the community, spent some valuable face-to-face time with people, and listened to their stories. As a graduate student, I worked with Mary P. Sheridan on a digital media camp for middle school girls and with Brenda Jo Brueggemann on arts-based workshops for individuals with developmental disabilities. Both projects took up digital composing in different ways. We taught middle school girls video editing and image manipulation using open access technologies, and we developed photography and video editing workshops for adults and children with developmental disabilities. Both projects were deeply collaborative and emphasized creation, not consumption, of digital texts. For me, when it comes to community-based writing projects, it's important to know who wants to be involved and what expertise they bring; and reciprocity is also vital—making sure that it's not just the academic researchers who benefit from the research activity, but more importantly that community groups gain something they identify as a need or aspiration.

*Does maker culture impact your pedagogy or your vision for instructors working in the ISU Writing Program?*

Makerspaces are often implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) feminist in that they erode the hierarchies at work in more conventional spaces; makerspaces are also multimodal and collaborative, relying on often ephemeral community interactions. One of the immediate possibilities for the Writing Program, we hope, will emerge from a new structural change of who is responsible for the eight classrooms in the STV 250 suite, which are primarily used by Writing Program instructors and students. CAS is now in charge of those spaces, and CAS-IT and our associate dean of IT and Facilities are actively eliciting our input into how to renovate classrooms in order to improve contemporary writing instruction at ISU. We are excited to talk about different ways to make them more *active learning* spaces where people can move their bodies and furniture and have more flexible relationships with diverse technologies. Ultimately, I imagine our goals will be increased accessibility and flexibility. So this fall, we will ask instructors in the program: What are the things that work for you in those spaces? What does not work for you? I want to hear from writing instructors about how these learning spaces could be improved for them and students in their courses.

*For the writing program, what are your first-year goals? What are your five-year plan goals? What are your 10-year goals?*

My primary first-year goal is to learn how to do my job well and not be a jerk. Supporting the Writing Program leadership team of seven doctoral students in meeting their goals individually and as a team will be important. I want to meet our writing instructors, learn more about who is teaching in the program, and get an idea of who students are in writing classes as well. I also want to work closely with Program Coordinator Maegan Gaddis to figure out what we have done and what we can do as a program. These things will come with a learning curve and a lot of listening—rhetorical listening—which means listening with a lot of generosity and paying attention to affective responses. My five-year plan is more ambitious: to have a clear idea of how we will renovate those learning spaces; to know where things (and people) are; and to know more about people and what they want to do and how that aligns with the program. In five years, I will have a much clearer idea of the trajectory of the program, including future research, assessment, and outcomes and curricular revisions. In that time frame, I also hope to collaborate with instructors to figure out a balance of professional development for both new and returning instructors. As far as a 10-year plan, I've never done anything for more than five years. So, we will have to talk again after the first five years.

## Undergraduate News and Accomplishments

### Selected Publications, Presentations, and Awards

**Megan Donnan** was awarded the Publications Unit Publishing Award.

This academic year ***Euphemism***—ISU's student-led journal for the creative arts (advised by Professor Jeremy Hurley)—edited, produced, and published two issues (14.1 and 14.2) and hosted two reading events at University Galleries in Uptown Normal that showcased the work of published authors. Editorial board members were Alexandra Daggett, Christine O'Malley, Christopher Henning, Megan Donnan, Mary Ochs, Haley Varnes, Hannah Carpenter, Stephanie Hedgespeth, Samantha Ladson, Kristin Heyder, Jesse Manarang, and Hayley Hansen.

**Shelby Hatchel, Allyson Morton, and Megan Shanafelt** were nominated by new (first-year and transfer) ISU students for the 2019 Impact Awards, which recognize “the impact individual members of the campus community have on our new students and on student retention.”

**Stephanie Hedgespeth** was awarded the Dorothy Bryan Schemske Scholarship.

**Emi Howard** won the Julia N. Visor Scholarship Award.

**Casey Babcock, Alexandra Daggett, Colleen Keefe, and Elisa Williams** presented at the Illinois Association of Teachers of English Conference in Hoffman Estates Oct 19-20, 2018.

**Elisa Williams** facilitated, with colleagues from the Chicago Teacher Education Pipeline, the North River Commission, the Resurrection Project, and Latinos Progresando, a session titled “Using Neuroscience to Empower Urban Educators, Students, and Communities” at the Culturally Responsive Campus Community Conference in Normal Oct. 30-31, 2018.

**Colleen Keefe** was awarded The Glenn Grever English Education Scholarship.

Senior English studies major **Alexa Parker** successfully defended her honors thesis, “Male Anxiety in the Life of Saint Cecilia:

*Continued on page 10*

Examining England from Ælfric to Chaucer.” Thesis committee members were Professor Susan Kim, director, and Professor Katherine Ellison, reader.

Senior English studies major **Alanah Ruffin** defended her honors thesis, “The Other as Monster in Early Vampire Literature.” Thesis committee members were Professor Bob McLaughlin, director, and Professor Julie Jung, reader.

## Faculty News and Accomplishments

### Selected Publications, Presentations, and Awards

**Breu, Christopher.** “Debt and Sensuality.” *The Debt Age*. Ed. Jeffrey di Leo, Peter Hitchcock, and Sophia A. McClennen. New York: Routledge, 2018. 42-54.

**Bob Broad**, at the invitation of Interim Director of Rhetoric Professor Kristi McDuffie (an alum of our department’s Ph.D. program), conducted two workshops with faculty in the Rhetoric Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. These workshops led participants through the process of Dynamic Criteria Mapping to help them illuminate, explore, and negotiate what they value in their students’ writing.

**Professor Karen Coats** was acknowledged for Outstanding Graduate Mentoring by the English Department.

**De Santis, Christopher C.** “The Brilliant Rebel, Rebellious Against Everything: The Nonfictional Writings of Langston Hughes,” *Langston Hughes Review* 25.1, special issue, *Remembering Langston Hughes: His Art, Life, and Legacy Fifty Years Later* (Spring 2019): 105-114.

**Katherine Ellison’s** “Media Scholarship and 18th-Century Studies” *Literature Compass* 14/3 (2017) was the most downloaded article in the journal in 2018.

**Professor Kass Fleisher** is the founding publisher of Steerage Press and released, September 15, 2018, *Remedia: A Picaresque* by Michael Joyce.

## Professor Tara Lyons leads study abroad trip to England centered on Shakespeare, the stage

During a recent summer term, undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the English Department spent time studying abroad under the guidance of English Department Associate Professor Tara Lyons.

As an undergraduate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Lyons went on a similar study abroad program that focused on “Theater in England.” For her, it was life-changing and “struck up my love for Shakespeare in performance and cutting-edge shows that really push audiences to think.” Then, as a graduate student, Lyons was lucky enough to work as a teaching assistant for two faculty-led study abroad programs in England, so she knew how to handle the logistics of such a program before she arrived at ISU. Lyons mentioned, “When I was interviewing for a faculty position, I noted that the English Department did not have any faculty-led study abroad programs and decided this was one way I could contribute to the department.” She and former ISU professor Hilary Justice teamed up to design the program.

Lyons and her students began the program in Stratford-Upon-Avon, where students toured the Shakespeare houses and the Royal Shakespeare Company theaters and rehearsal spaces, imagining what life and theater were like in the 16th and 17th centuries. “I love learning about Shakespeare and have always enjoyed theater productions,” said graduate student Becca Olsen, who returned to ISU to complete her master’s degree in 2018 after graduating with her bachelor’s degree in 2010 and took advantage of this study abroad opportunity. Lyons noted, “Stratford is a small but idyllic riverside town, and its manageable size helped students adjust to England during the first week of the program. We saw three shows in Stratford: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Venice Preserved*, and *As You Like It*.”



Next up was London, where Lyons and her students saw six shows: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at Shakespeare’s Globe; *The Chronicles of Majnun and Layla* at the Gate Theatre; *End of History* at the Royal Court; *Bronx Gothic* at the Young Vic; and *Six the Musical* at the Arts Theatre. They also toured the Royal Opera House and students engaged in a workshop at the Globe Theatre with a star from the London stage, Nadia Albino. “For me,” said Lyons, “that was one of the highlights of the trip. Nadia urged the students to explore how punctuation and meter in the Shakespearean text can be used to explore movement on the Globe’s stage.” Lyons and her students also were invited to watch a rehearsal of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the show they saw in performance later the same night.



When asked why these specific experiences were chosen for this study abroad program, Lyons was clear. “The plays, their content, casting, directors, and spaces of performance were all considered when I was designing the class. I wanted students to explore different kinds of theaters in England, from small pub theaters to a large West End venue. It was also important to me that the works we studied featured diverse voices.”

One night the class went to The Gate, a small blackbox theater above a pub in Notting Hill. The show was part of the Shubbak Festival, a UK celebration of Arab culture and arts with two talented musicians. Palestinian actor Amer Hlehel wove the poetry of Qassim Haddad into an elegant love story based on the tales of two tragic lovers, Majnun and Layla. Lyons described the show as “more like musical storytelling than a scripted play; the three performers remained seated throughout the performance and the focus was on the musicality of the language, as Hlehel moved seamlessly between English and Arabic.”

This show, as well as Okwui Okpokwasili’s *Bronx Gothic*, a dance and spoken-word performance piece, ensured that students experienced theater that reflected some of the global diversity of London as a city. Lyons also noted that The Shakespeare Globe is “living up to its promise of diverse casting in terms of race and disability, and so students had the opportunity to see a brilliantly diverse cast knock this canonical work out of the park (or wooden O)! We were also so lucky to see Charlotte Arrowsmith, the Royal Shakespeare Company’s first deaf actor, perform in two separate plays, *Taming of the Shrew* and *As You Like It*, in Stratford. She was stunning!”



For Olsen, theater has always been a part of her life, so “it was amazing

to go behind the scenes with so many professional companies and to learn from the actors themselves. Between the tours, workshops, and performances, we were able to see how different places and people can take a text and bring their own interpretation of it to life. Seeing both backstage and the performances allowed us to learn about what was done to bring their interpretations to life and to view the final products. The concept came full circle, and it showed how the imagination could truly become a reality.”

Lyons hopes for students who took part in the class that being immersed in three weeks of theater, students will be able to speak to the myriad ways that performance can shape the meaning of a text from lighting to costumes to music to casting, etc., as they move on to other classes. Also valuable to students in the future is “their ability to understand Shakespeare’s texts and situate that writing within the culture of early modern England since much of Stratford-upon-Avon offered opportunities to see how Shakespeare and his contemporaries lived and thought.”

As they move forward into their careers, Lyons wants students to be open to new experiences and people. “I want them to continue to understand that what seems natural to them is not a universal standard. I want them to continue to challenge themselves and keep trying to see the world through others’ eyes.” Lyons also mentioned that in terms of traveling, “I hope they are much more capable now of planning international travel on their own; they know how to book their flights, travel to/from large airports, use public transportation, and maneuver through a maze of streets with the help of maps. Those skills will come in handy down the line, I am sure.” Lyons plans to lead this study abroad opportunity again during the summer of 2021. She mentioned, “Make sure to apply early!”

**Gudding, Gabriel.** “Teaching Behavioral Skills in Introductory CW Courses: A Proposal.” *Creative Writing and Affect. Creative Writing Education Today: A Nomadic Symposium*, Feb. 1, 2019, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington. Lecture.

**Haas, A.M., & Eble, M.F.** (Eds.). (2018). *Key theoretical frameworks: Teaching technical communication in the twenty-first century*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP.

**Halle, Steve.** “Editor-Translator Flash Sessions.” *American Literary Translators Association Conference 41: Performance, Props, and Platforms*, November 2, 2018, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, Workshop.

**Duriel E. Harris**, *Obsidian* Editor, and *Obsidian* Senior Editorial Assistant Danielle Sutton were congratulated, as *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora* won the Parnassus Award for Significant Editorial Achievement from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals, announced recently at MLA in Chicago.

**Hochstetler, Sarah.** (Ed.) (2018). *Reform and Literacy Education: History, Effects, and Advocacy*. New York, New York; Routledge.

**Sarah Hochstetler, Danielle Lillge, and Maggie Morris Davis** received a University Assessment Initiative Award, “Developing a Multi-Semester Teaching Assessment.”

**Professor Elise Verzosa Hurley** was acknowledged for Outstanding Graduate Mentoring by the English Department.

**Professor Julie Jung** was acknowledged for her Outstanding Service to the English Department.

**Kalter, Susan.** Invited talk: “Working with Indigenous and Endangered Languages and their Translation.” Invited panelist. *Forty-first American Literary Translators Association Conference: Performance, Props, and Platforms*. November 1, 2018, Bloomington, Indiana.

**Professor Susan Kim** was acknowledged as an English Department Exceptional

*Continued on page 12*

Teacher of the Year.

**Danielle Lillge** was awarded the Red Tassel Mortar Board Award for Excellence in Scholarship, Service, and Leadership, Illinois State University, 2019.

**Bill McBride** presented “Past the Outskirts of Infinity-Yahweh’s *Qadash Blues*” for the panel Sacred Troubling: Topics in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Qur’an. March 8, 2019, American Comparative Literature Association, Georgetown University.

**Robillard, Amy E.** *We Find Ourselves in Other People’s Stories: On Narrative Collapse and a Lifetime Search for Story.* New York: Routledge, 2019.

**Seloni, L.** (2019) Enacting reflexivity in second language writing research: A personal account of cultural production of authorial self and researcher perception (pp.107-130). In M. Grenfell and K. Pahl (with contributions from Cheryl McClean, Catherine Compton-Lilly and Lisya Seloni). *Bourdieu, Language-based Ethnographies and Reflexivity: Putting Theory into Practice.* Routledge.

**Professor Erika Sparby** was acknowledged as an English Department Exceptional Teacher of the Year.

**Professor Joyce Walker** was acknowledged as an English Department Exceptional Teacher of the Year.

## Graduate Student News and Accomplishments

### Selected Publications, Presentations, and Awards

**Alkhateeb, Abdulelah.** “Dynamic Transfer and Relations between First Language (L1) Proficiency and Second Language (L2) Writing Skills Performance.” *Arab World English Journal* Vol 9, No. 4. December 2018. Pp 324-336.

**Cox, Courtney, Ralston, Devon F., & Woods, Charles.** “Negotiating Ethics of Participatory Investigation in True Crime Podcasts.” Computers and Writing Conference. Panel. Michigan State University. June 20-22, 2019.

**Lisa Dooley** was recently named the

## Graduate student research and service

### Trivedi publishes second book of poetry, *Your Relationship to Motion Has Changed*

*Your Relationship to Motion Has Changed* is a book of poems that started out as 10 long poems, but graduate student Amish Trivedi soon realized that was kind of hard to read, so he edited it quite a bit between 2011 and 2018, when it got picked up. He cautions readers, “I wouldn’t expect any answers from it—I come to poetry to find more questions that need asking, so if one is looking for some kind of wisdom, or worse, if one is looking for some kind of path to my inner psyche, they are out of luck. But otherwise, a fairly slim book, and one that, the more I have considered it, is in a lineage with the language poets and post-language folks.” Trivedi sees his test as trying to boil out all the stuff we might latch onto in this sort of social media driven, narcissistic period and focus on the basic building block of communication construction.



The title comes from a thing Trivedi said to his wife, Jenn, after she had a bad experience flying, which filtered into other forms of travel for her. That was around 2006, and it lingered as an idea for about four to five years before Trivedi really got to work. Bits and pieces came out of work he had been tinkering with during his MFA, so as Trivedi got ready to put that project together, he let what had lingered take center stage. The evolution of this project was intense, for, as Trivedi notes, “it was 10 long poems that got cut up and cut down and I started finding threads throughout it, sequences that worked together. There’s a lot of Americana in there that I was really fascinated with—am still fascinated with. At the same time, part of that Americana isn’t just our mythos from pilgrims through the modern day, there’s the dark side of it—through murder and terror. I think that’s where serial killers came into the whole text.”

For Trivedi, it’s hard to say what the award means for his career. “One always wants to imagine publication as some kind of game changer, when most of the time, it’s not that. Usually by the time a book comes out, you’re so far beyond it with new projects, etc. that you almost find yourself annoyed that you have to get back into editing and doing readings and publicizing it. Kind of a strange beast that way.” Trivedi notes that he was really happy that Shearman picked it up because they have generally been publishing really experimental, strange work in the UK.

“It’s strange to see it doing well there and sort of going nowhere here, though. Like ... am I in the wrong place? I’m reminded of a line from the movie *Singles* from the early ’90s (I think?): We’re really big in Norway right now.”

In terms of specific poems within the work which readers might seek out, “Manifest” seems to be popular among readers because it strangely predicts Trump before Trump. For Trivedi, some of his personal favorites are the “Thousand Years of Staring” poems and, certainly, the title poem, even though it comes at the end, as it provides a roadmap to the whole text in an odd way.

When asked what he is working on now, or where readers might find his upcoming work, Trivedi was frank: “As usual, working on like nine things. First, of course, is the dissertation. Secondly, something that seems to be turning into a novel type thing. I don’t want to call it that, but it’s not work I’m used to doing. Third, there’s a manuscript I thought I had finished but it’s getting nowhere, so I know I’ll have to play with it at some point ... or abandon it.” Trivedi and his partner just moved, so he will be getting used to a new area and getting to work nearly full time on the dissertation, which is a thing he never thought he’d get a chance to do. “I’m excited to really throw myself into critical work for the next year. And, of course, applying for jobs and things.”

## Pedagogy beyond the classroom with Courtney Cox, Bryanna Tidmarsh, and Charles Woods

### Courtney Cox

Each semester, students enrolled in Ph.D. student Courtney Cox's composition courses take part in the Activity System Art Gallery field trip to the University Art Galleries in Uptown Normal. Cox loves the connections between visual art and writing and after visiting the gallery, wanted to find a way to ensure her students found these connections and explored an exciting corner of campus they might not otherwise check out. She was inspired to create this project because "I am always looking for ways to take learning outside of the walls of a classroom, as well as a way to complicate student understanding of some of the concepts in our program that need conceptualization to deepen understanding."

Cox sees writing research as embodied in many ways, so getting students up and moving through space to disrupt their antecedent knowledge about the work of a writing class is imperative to her pedagogy. Students go to the art gallery with Cox as a class to take field notes about how the message of the art gallery is shared with audiences. They have a document she created, the Activity System Understanding Sheet, as a guide and will use the posed questions to craft a response, thinking about the gallery as an activity system. This is right after the introduction of CHAT, so the next day, they'll be broken up into groups and assigned one CHAT term to map and share with the rest of the class. Ultimately, this project "turns the conversation to materiality, access, and audience in ways that are often taken for granted when we're looking at traditional texts in the classroom."

Cox notes that "the goal of the assignment is to prompt students to deepen their understanding of the possibilities of multimodality in creating and sustaining a message and to begin to think about composition systematically in ways that are necessary for CHAT/discourse communities/impact of writing." In this way, students are able to find some connections with the concepts of CHAT beyond the classroom. "I think it pushes them to think about literate activity in a more comprehensive way, and through the introduction of a new space, they're able to think in new ways."

Since Cox is not teaching in the Writing Program next semester, she is not planning on doing this exact project. However, since she will be teaching technical communication and has an interest in service learning, the practice of building a relationship with other campus departments is important. "The curator has given a gallery talk each time I've done this assignment, and since I am a strong supporter of visual arts and campus culture, I would love to complete a service-learning project to help promote a place on campus like this one." Ultimately, Cox is proud that each time her students have presented their ideas, they notice a nuanced rhetorical strategy of the gallery that she had not. She is also proud that this is one of the ways she can shake up her classroom and "show students that learning isn't spatially bound to the Stevenson 250 suite."



recipient of the Illinois State University Outstanding University Teaching Award at the Ph.D. graduate student level, and was also selected by ISU as the nominee for the Midwest Association of Graduate Schools Excellence in Teaching Award.

**Halsey, Robin.** "Promoting Academic Literacy: Equipping English Learners for Success in Post-Secondary Programs." Ohio TESOL Conference, *Breaking Through Language Barriers: Success Across Content*. Columbus, Ohio, October 12-13, 2018.

**Colleen Karn**, Ph.D. student, has been asked to serve another year as the graduate student representative on the Governing Board of the Popular Culture Association.

**Koenig, Charley.** "Female Bodies as Representations of Nature: Agency Versus Passivity in *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *mother!*" Midwest Modern Language Association 2018 Convention, "Consuming Cultures," Kansas City, Missouri, November 15-18, 2018.

**Kroonblawd, Hannah.** "I'll Tell You Two Stories": Collective Trauma and Meaning-Making through the Fantastic in Hideo Furukawa's *Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure*. Literary Fantasy and Its Discontents. Taipei Technical University, Taiwan. November 2018.

**Rebecca Lorenzo** was awarded the Professor Elizabeth Hatmaker Memorial Scholarship.

**Mixon-Webster, Jonah.** *Stereo (TYPE)*. Ahsahta Press. Boise State University. May 2018. [www.spdbooks.org](http://www.spdbooks.org). Mixon-Webster also won the prestigious PEN/Osterweil Poetry Award.

**Mondal, Sayanti.** "Filling in the Gap: The Dynamics between the English Translations of Mahasweta Devi's Fiction and Non-Fiction," *Mahasweta Devi: Her Art and Vision*, edited by Sanjeev Viswakarma. Kokata: Viswabharati Press. 2019. p. 97-108.

**Munira Mutmainna** was awarded the Glenn Grever Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Master's Student.

**Shelby Ragan** was awarded The Taimi Maria Ranta Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Ph.D. Candidate.

**Erika Romero**, Ph.D. student, has been chosen as an Ora Bretall Fellow.

**Shahmiri, Sanam**. Review of *Negative Space* by Luljeta Lleshanaku, translated by Ani Gjika. *Kenyon Review*, March 2019, [kenyonreview.org/reviews/mar-2019-micro-reviews](http://kenyonreview.org/reviews/mar-2019-micro-reviews).

**Benjamin Sutton** was awarded the William Morgan Poetry Award.

**Amish Trivedi's** book, *Your Relationship to Motion Has Changed*, was listed as a recommendation for spring 2019 by the Poetry Book Society in the United Kingdom.

**Woods, Charles**. "Coding" and "3-D Printing." In (Ed.) J. Tham, *Keywords & Concepts in Making + Design Thinking*. WAC Foundations and Innovations in Technical and Professional Communication Series.

**Demet Yigitbilek** was awarded the Anna Keaton English Scholarship

## Alumni News and Accomplishments

### Alumnus Mark Schmitt receives the Distinguished Service Award at the 2019 Founders Day Celebration

**Mark Schmitt '96** began working at Milner Library in 1992 as a student assistant in what was once known as the Humanities Division on the sixth floor. Jean André Cadieux, then floor manager of the division, took a chance on the thoroughly unpolished 18-year-old Schmitt. He credits Cadieux as the inspiration and architect of his success. Shortly after graduating with a bachelor's degree in English, Schmitt came back to Milner as a full-time employee and has been there ever since.

For the last nine years, Schmitt has been a senior specialist in Milner Library's Special Collections where he has the great fortune of being able to work with students, faculty, visiting researchers and scholars, and creative people from all over the globe on exciting projects ranging from class assignments to major

## Bryanna Tidmarsh

During the 2018-19 academic year, the ISU English Department Diversity and Equity Teaching Award was shared between two graduate students, Wesley Jacques and Bryanna Tidmarsh. This annual award is given to a graduate student instructor whose pedagogy aligns with the ideals of not only diversity and equity, but also social justice and inclusion. We chatted with Tidmarsh about the award.



Tidmarsh explained that enacting a pedagogy which accounts for diversity and equity takes thoughtfulness. "In my 8 years of teaching, I have thought about how to center diversity, equity, and inclusion in my pedagogy—whether it be for an English 101 course or for special topics courses. In ENG 101 specifically, we examine various genres of multimodal artifacts by diverse authors to facilitate conversations about race, gender, immigration/citizenship, and language practices."

Tidmarsh designed her internship course to focus on youth literature, multimodality, and civic engagement. While conceptualizing the course, she "first thought about diversity in relation to the novels I wanted to teach, ultimately choosing a reading list of books by people of color, queer people, and women, making sure these books were thematically and stylistically very different from one another. I also decided to apply several different assessment methods, all of which allow students to be active participants in assessing their own work and the work of their classmates." Tidmarsh continues to create an inclusive space for students to help shape their projects, whether it's choosing a topic, divvying up tasks among group members, or deciding what kinds of research they need to do for their final report. "Overall, I try to take into consideration the various identities and learning styles of my students in creating opportunities for them to learn and grow, and I continuously link the texts to what's happening outside the classroom: in my students' lives, and in our various communities of belonging."

When asked what a pedagogy which accounts for diversity and equity looks like in action in the classroom, Tidmarsh acknowledged this as "a big question because diversity and equity need to be present in several ways: the class culture, student-teacher relationships, lesson plans, discussions, the syllabus, the reading list, assignments, assessment practices, and so on. To have diversity and equity, the course must be centered on it—built on it from the ground up. It involves cultivating a supportive, inquisitive community in the classroom, which takes time and work. It involves decentering whiteness and teaching a diverse selection of authors, especially those from traditionally marginalized groups. It involves taking risks—daring to talk about hard topics, being willing to make mistakes, admitting to our students when we do, and forever trying to do better." Tidmarsh thinks instructors should consider diversity and equity in course design, but also in the classroom itself and in the world outside it. "The instructor does a lot of this ground work, but the students are part of shaping this as well."

Tidmarsh's pedagogy is influenced by several intersecting theoretical frameworks, including queer theory, critical race theory, feminist ethics of care, and activist rhetorics. "I have learned so much from my mentors and colleagues about empathy and equity in the classroom, and so many peers in my MFA and Ph.D. studies. Tidmarsh also points instructors towards the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning on campus, which has been a vital resource for thinking about how to talk about civic engagement and incorporate service learning in her courses. Tidmarsh is thankful for the dedication of her mentors and for the award. "For me, it's just a nice sign to keep doing the work, and to continue building caring relationships with my students, mentors, peers, and community partners."

## Charles Woods

Ph.D. student Charles Woods won an institutional grant to partner with Milner Library Make-It Space to bring makerspace technologies into his Writing in the Academic Disciplines course. Throughout our project, which included using the library's Make It Space technologies and then

producing the Make It Space Project Symposium featuring student projects, "success was defined by understanding the activity system(s) surrounding each technology and the literacies needed for users to utilize each technology effectively." For this project, 17 students and the instructor collaborated for the final six weeks of the semester to utilize the Milner space,

generate eight group projects which positively impact the ISU community or the communities of Bloomington-Normal, and produce the symposium.

Students were researching through hands-on experience how to use digital technologies such as 3D printing, computer-aided design programs, and analog technologies, book binders and die cutters. Students were tasked with a great deal of writing, including taking field notes, cataloging their experiences, and creating texts and images to produce their poster presentation for the symposium.

While students really were performing as writer-researchers, according to Woods, the most important aspect of the Make It Space project was not the writing, researching, or multi-modal component. "The most critical aspect was the community-engagement aspect of the project," he said.

While students were tasked with researching Make It Space technologies and writing about their experiences, the object of production, that is, what they produced using the technologies, was required to positively impact the ISU community or the communities of Bloomington-Normal. Students produced projects which focused on propelling student intervention in environmental redemption, developing a potential program to aid in domestic animal adoption, and developing resources to expand education concerning rape culture on university campuses.



The culmination of our hard work was the symposium, which displayed all of the student projects produced. Attendance at the event was exceptional, with many ISU Writing Program instructors, administrators, and entire sections of classes

attending, as well as Milner Library administrators and IT staff.

Woods added, "For this project, students embodied what it means to be writer-researchers working in the world, but we also embodied what it means to be community-engaged citizen writers. Students learned a bit about literacy and technology and the makerspace movement, sure, but they also learned how to be responsible team members and proactive community members—an essential aspect to success as a student and a writer in the world."

feature-length films and documentaries. Milner Library's Special Collections is a true destination spot at Illinois State University, as it houses impossibly rare and fantastic items, many of which are one-of-a-kind, and Special Collections' mission is to integrate its holdings into the curriculum.

Working with such an invaluable resource as Special Collections has led Schmitt to be involved in numerous speaking engagements, workshops, articles, and writing projects. He has worked extensively with Milner's Circus and Allied Arts Collection, an internationally recognized archive of fascinating and rare materials that brings people from the world over to campus to access. Along with head of Special Collections and Rare Books Maureen Brunsdale, Schmitt co-authored the book *The Bloomington-Normal Circus Legacy: The Golden Age of Aerialists* in 2013.

**Julie Bates Ph.D.'17** won the Outstanding Dissertation Award from the Association for the Teaching of Technical Writing.

**Jon Etter '96**, English teacher education, a teacher at Wauwatosa East High School in Wisconsin, published *A Dreadful Fairy Book*, the first installment in his "Those Dreadful Fairy Tale Books" series. ([jonline.com/story/communities/west/things-to-do/2018/11/12/jon-etter-wauwatosa-east-high-school-teacher-releases-dreadful-fairy-book/1890438002](http://jonline.com/story/communities/west/things-to-do/2018/11/12/jon-etter-wauwatosa-east-high-school-teacher-releases-dreadful-fairy-book/1890438002))

**Adriene Galindo '13**, Publishing, Rare Visual Materials Catalog librarian at the Boston Athenæum, was featured in a story published in *Fine Books Magazine* and Cision PR Newswire about a rare book exhibit she co-curated, *Venezia/Behold Venice!* The exhibit featured a first edition of Marco Polo's *Wonders of the World* (1496), works of the Venetian scholar-printer Aldus Manutius, and an illustrated edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1493). ([finebooksmagazine.com/press/2018/11/boston-athenaeum-showcases-holdings-from-and-about-venice.html](http://finebooksmagazine.com/press/2018/11/boston-athenaeum-showcases-holdings-from-and-about-venice.html))

**Samantha Paoletti '10**, English teacher education, an English teacher and reading specialist at Marist High School in

*Continued on page 16*

Chicago, published “Collaborating with Kindergarteners Made My High School Students Better Writers” in KQED Education, a “hub for learning and engagement” with a focus on “amplifying youth voice, making media, civic participation, and richer learning.”

**Kathryn Sall '18**, English teacher education, an English teacher at James B. Conant High School in Hoffman Estates, IL, was named Outstanding Beginning Teacher for 2019 by the Illinois Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

**Asia-Ana Williams '18**, English Teacher education, a teacher at Chicago Public Schools' Ellen H. Richards Career Academy, was featured in a news story titled “New Teacher Finds Affirmation on First Day of School,” which was aired on WTTW's Chicago Tonight. ([chicagotonight.wttw.com/2018/09/06/new-teacher-finds-affirmation-first-day-school](http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2018/09/06/new-teacher-finds-affirmation-first-day-school))

### **(Faculty) Professor Smith Wins College of Arts and Sciences John A. Dossey Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Tenured Faculty Member**

Professor K. Aaron Smith was awarded The John A. Dossey Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Tenured Faculty Member. Smith was nominated for this College of Arts and Sciences award by the English Department and wrote a teaching portfolio which summarizes performance, philosophy and scholarship in the area of teaching over the last three years, and in the fuller context of an entire teaching career.

Smith's overarching notion in the classroom and toward his students is, “If I can know this, you can too.” He thinks that it is an important way to approach the material he teaches. “Linguistics, grammar, history of English can be daunting, and students might arrive in my classes already intimidated, so I attempt to diffuse any anxiety by instilling some confidence in them from the beginning.” Smith acknowledges the areas he teaches differ from other areas of English, particularly at the beginning levels: “There

## Teaching the Holocaust: New Book Aims to Help English Instructors

By Rachel Hatch, University Marketing and Communications

Teaching a subject as weighty as the Holocaust is no easy feat. It can be an even greater challenge for English literature instructors who have little background in Holocaust studies to teach literature set during the Holocaust.



Paula Ressler (left) and Becca Chase

“A book like *The Diary of a Young Girl*, by Anne Frank, is a wonderful and important work, but the book itself doesn't tell much about the Holocaust,” said Illinois State University's Associate Professor Emerita of English Paula Ressler. “It's generally up to teachers to fill in those gaps and explain what's happening outside the attic where the Franks hid.”

Ressler and former English and Women's and Gender Studies faculty member Becca Chase aim to contextualize Holocaust literature and provide pedagogical guidance for current and future English teachers through their new book, *Meaningful Encounters: Preparing Educators to Teach Holocaust Literature* (Rowman & Littlefield). Ressler hopes the work can help teachers across the country. “I've observed students who had to teach Holocaust texts, and the frustration that came because they did not have the background,” she said. “They need a way to navigate.”

With the aim of giving educators a base of knowledge, the book unpacks oversimplified concepts about the Holocaust. It includes a brief history of the Holocaust, events leading up to it, and its aftereffects. “The book is designed to build on what teachers and students already know, challenge misconceptions, generate empathy for victims and survivors, and help them better understand the moral issues people faced that relate to what people face today,” said Ressler, who add *Meaningful Encounters* links the difficult content with the literary theories and educational practices that promote deep learning.

The work is a case study of an English teacher education course taught by Ressler. “Becca and I identify and analyze the issues these preservice [future] teachers grappled with,” she said. “Beginning with their efforts to recognize contemporary antisemitism, we track how the education students explored big themes in literature and pedagogy, such as ethical and moral dilemmas, feminist literary criticism or Holocaust literature and feminist writing about the Holocaust, classroom dissonance, and literary education.”

Chase believes *Meaningful Encounters* can provide insights for teachers on more than the Holocaust. “The book can be a useful reference for educators interested in teaching about genocides and mass atrocities in responsible and ethical ways,” she said. “It also can help teachers and their students link what happened then to today's world.”

Helping teachers engage students in difficult conversation supports the development of lifelong skills geared toward building mutual respect, noted Chase. “A lot of people don't touch subjects like the Holocaust in class because the subjects are too fraught, or they don't go into them too deeply because they think doing so will be too traumatic,” said Chase. A former assistant director of Illinois State's Women's and Gender Studies program, Chase is a writer and editor who served on the staffs of the feminist journals *Sojourner*, *Women's Review of Books*, and *Woman of Power*. “But to understand ethical and moral dilemmas people experience today—and to stand up to injustice—students and their teachers need exposure, theory, discourse, and praxis.”

Both Ressler and Chase have been active in social justice work throughout their lives and careers, within the Civil Rights, peace, and LGBTQ liberation movements. “There is a Hebrew expression, *tikkun olam*, meaning ‘repairing the world.’ This effort is at the core of our practices. It's why I became a teacher,” said Ressler, who is author of *Dramatic Changes: Talking about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity with High School Students through Drama* (Heinemann), winner of the Outstanding Book Award from the American Alliance for Theatre of Education.



## Faculty Research

### Trites Explores Material Feminism in Young Adult Literature

By Rachel Hatch, University Marketing and Communications

Modern feminism is more than the status of women in a society. In the United States, feminism has evolved as a reflection of the issues that suppress equality for all. Illinois State University's Distinguished Professor of English Roberta Trites explores the newest ideas in feminist writing as seen through the characters in young adult literature (YA). Trites, the author of *Twenty-First-Century Feminisms in Children's and Adolescent Literature*, notes that feminism goes deeper than female empowerment and power structures. "It's still important that a young, female protagonist be empowered," said Trites, "but there's much more to be explored than just social power."



Coming under the heading of "material feminism," feminist writings are now working to understand the relationship between people and their interaction with the material to understand the relationship between people and their interaction with the material world. "The idea is that every person, every object, has some form of agency on us—some sort of effect—and we are changed through perceptual processes," said Trites. "The material feminists believe we must pay attention to the material world in order to understand gendering."

In *Twenty-First-Century Feminisms*, Trites looks to YA novels to touch on the cornerstones of material feminism, including critical race theory, neoliberalism, and ecofeminism.

Connected to the concerns of the devastation due to climate change, ecofeminism explores how female bodies and land can be exploited in the same way. "There's a mythology in American history of men owning the land, and conquering the land, cultivating the land, and tilling and sowing the land," said Trites. "Women, who are equated with the body, can suffer the same treatment with the idea they can be owned and exploited."

Ecofeminism is on display in the 2013 dystopian novel *Orleans* by Sherri Smith, said Trites, which focuses on a female protagonist in a hurricane-destroyed New Orleans. "In *Orleans*, the main character Fen is a teenage girl, but there is nothing romantic with the male lead. They create a partnership, and take care of one another to achieve their goal," said Trites.

Trites looked to a vastly different novel to explain material feminism's jab at putting profit over people. "Libba Bray's *Beauty Queens* is a wickedly funny look at neoliberalism through the eyes of beauty contestants stranded on an island," she said. "It's important to remember that women can have social power, but it can be undermined, whether financially or through objectification."

Material feminism can be seen as the next step in feminist studies. Scholars tended to view feminism in the United States as coming in "waves." The first wave in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is characterized by the push for women's property and suffrage rights. The second wave of the 1950s-1970s centered on female empowerment and equality. The third wave—from the 1990s to the early 2000s—focused on community. "Feminist scholars and authors began to examine whether a woman has a voice and a choice within a community. Is she even allowed to have a community of support?" asked Trites.

YA works tend to reflect waves of feminism in varying degrees, noted Trites. Looking at the popular *Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins (2008-2011), the female lead, Katniss Everdeen, is strong, but still falls short in some areas of third-wave feminism. "Katniss is an empowered character, but she only has a voice when she is seen as embodying the symbolic Mockingjay," said Trites. "And at the end of the books, she has no female community." The series' other main fellow character, Peeta Mellark, defers all power to Katniss. "He's a classic

are facts and terms and concepts that simply have to be learned. If I came into the classroom with the mindset that I am the keeper of knowledge and that my students will never be able to know what I know, one, I would be a jerk, and two, it would hamper their learning, or more accurately, willingness to learn."

For Smith, winning this award recognizes his efforts in the classroom but also in his scholarship—he has published/prepared several manuscripts in the last few years on his teaching, including a textbook on the history of English with his ISU colleague Professor Susan Kim. In addition to their textbook, Kim and Smith have a chapter published in an MLA volume on the teaching of English and a grammar book manuscript that Smith has used in his classes and for which he is currently seeking a publisher.

As for what Smith does best in the classroom, "I think clarity and organization. I manage a class well. I also infuse my courses with humor, which I find to be important as it can help to diffuse anxiety and make students more open to learning." Smith continues to work on making his areas of teaching and scholarship available to students of many different intellectual backgrounds and to work toward his own understanding of how his area of scholarship is situated within the larger academy, both in his department but in the university as a whole. To do so, he observes major trends in other areas of study, especially at the theoretical level, and compares and contrasts those theoretical stances to his own so that he can share with students the areas of overlap and difference among various approaches to scholarship and research.

While this award recognizes the past three years, it encourages Smith to continue to reflect critically on his teaching and going forward, "I will think fondly on the award but I won't let it represent a pinnacle of my teaching and will continue to do the things I do best, and add in adjustments in my pedagogy as I move forward." Smith said, "It heartens me that my colleagues have recognized my efforts—I don't do the things I do in

Continued on page 18

Continued on page 18

teaching, scholarship or life in order to be rewarded by awards—and in fact have some problems with our award culture. But again, it's nice to get a pat on the back sometimes."

Looking ahead, Smith is shopping around for a publisher for his textbook on English grammar: "I have used the manuscript twice in my classes and two graduate students of mine have also used it. I also have a bulging folder of notes to begin writing an 'Introduction to Linguistics,' and I am itching to get started on that!" For Smith, preparation of the portfolio for this award was quite the undertaking, including writing out 10 essays of two pages or so in length a piece, so it required a lot of condensing. However, he was clear, "While the task is time consuming and onerous, there is the benefit that it is a great moment to really think about what you have been doing, for better or worse, and to sit back and appreciate yourself—something some people do too much of but others, like me, not enough."

#### Other Faculty Award Winners

**Professor Katherine Ellison** was named the 2019 College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Researcher in the Humanities.

**Professor Susan Kalter** won the 2019 College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Service Award.

**Professors Lisya Seloni and Paul Ugor** were recognized in 2019 with student Impact awards, created by University College to acknowledge the tremendous individual contributions members of the campus community have on new students, their overall success, retention, and ultimately graduation.

third-wave romantic hero who is very much of the mindset, 'It's all about you, baby,'" said Trites. "Peeta is so self-abdicating that he makes it all about her needs, her life, and her body being more important than his. That's not equality if one person is calling all the shots."

Material feminism in YA still examines relationships and empowerment, but views the characters as complete beings, rejecting the idea that the brain and body are separate. "We can't have a brain without a body. We can't have a body without a brain," said Trites, who added sexist roles are often entrenched in the separation. "Throughout much of Western history, women have been equated with the body and men with the mind."

Trites hopes instructors of YA literature will take the ideas of material feminism to infuse more discussions into their classroom, but advises teachers to look beyond lumping novels into categories. "Teachers need to think in a range beyond asking 'Is this work feminist? Is it sexist?'" said Trites. "It's not a binary. We can look at many different aspects of how we assess something as having elements of feminism."

Even if a book does not uphold all of the values of current ideas of feminism, Trites believes YA can provide an outlet that offers young women an alternative to sexism. "The need for female empowerment never goes away. Sadly, it's never out of style," she said.

## Undergraduate Spotlight: Maddi Kartcheske earns American Democracy Project Student Citizenship Award for civic engagement

### Maddi Kartcheske

ISU undergraduate Maddi Kartcheske received the American Democracy Project's Student Citizenship Award, a university-wide award given annually at the Civic Engagement Celebration. She was nominated by the supervisor of her student leaders at the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning; a trip advisor from the Alternative Spring Break trio she led to Wilmington, North Carolina; and the supervisor of her internship with the School of Social Work. She helped coordinate their annual Social Work Day, which focused on civic engagement and visual, performing, and written arts.

For Kartcheske, it meant a lot to be formally recognized for an area of study that she's been so passionate about throughout her college career. She received a minor in civic engagement and responsibility, and feels the award, in part, reflects the time and dedication she put into the subject. Along with helping others now, Kartcheske is thinking about her future: "As I move forward from my undergraduate education, the award will not only prove my dedication to civic engagement, but it serves as a reminder to value interdisciplinary learning. My major and minor are inextricably linked, and I will strive to do the same blending in my career."

Kartcheske said she is forever grateful for the people who work for and volunteer with the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning: "After volunteering with them for three years and working for them during my senior year, I was exposed to a community of dedicated and passionate individuals who consistently work to make a difference and educate their participants." Kartcheske is honored to be included in an incredible group of people who dedicate themselves to civic and community engagement. "I know it's thanks to the English Studies program that I was prepared for engaging with new frameworks," she said. "The program's dedication to critical thinking, interdisciplinary exposure, and theoretical analysis allowed me to be comfortable with complexity, asking questions, and learning from others."



For the next year, Kartcheske will be traveling internationally with a group called Up with People, which combines performing arts, civic engagement, and cultural competency to educate their students. Kartcheske will be volunteering an average of three days a week, staying with host families, and performing in a professional show once a week. Congratulations to Maddi Kartcheske and best of luck in her future endeavors!

## Ron Stacker Thompson (B.S. English, '64)

### College of Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame Inductee, 2019

On September 28, 2019, one of last year's Department of English Distinguished Alumni Award winners, Ron Stacker Thompson, was inducted into the College of Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame for his career achievements. Acting department chair Ricardo Cruz joined his wife, Carol, department chair Chris De Santis and his wife, Christy, professor emerita Jan Neuleib, Cle Thompson, President Larry Dietz, Dean Zosky, and others at the ceremony in celebrating Thompson's contributions to the arts.



Acting chair Ricardo Cruz, Carol Cruz, Ron Stacker Thompson, Cle Thompson, department chair Chris De Santis, and Christy De Santis

Thompson '64 has been a producer on such diverse films as *A Rage In Harlem*, *Deep Cover*, *The Cemetery Club*, *Sister Act 2*, and *Hoodlum*. Other feature credits include *To Sleep With Anger* and *Grand Canyon*. His film experience has afforded him the opportunity to work with such stellar talents as Whoopi Goldberg, Maggie Smith, Laurence Fishburne, Ellen Burstyn, Danny Glover, Christina Ricci, Jeff Goldblum, and Andy Garcia.

In television, he wrote and produced *America's Dream*, the highly acclaimed HBO Special nominated for nine Cable Ace Awards, two of which Thompson won for Best Writing and Best Producing of a Dramatic Series or Special. *America's Dream*, starring Danny Glover and Wesley Snipes (based on short stories by Maya Angelou, Richard Wright, and John Henrik Clarke), was also honored with the prestigious NAACP Image Award for Best Television or Mini-Series. Thompson has also written *Nat King Cole: Love in Return*, an award-winning series biography on the A&E Network. His most recent work is the feature *Funny Valentines* starring Alfre Woodard and Loretta Devine for BET/Universal.

It is in theater where Thompson developed his unique ability to successfully blend all aspects of his talent. As founder and artistic director of the Oakland Ensemble Theatre he produced and directed over 50 plays, many of which he wrote. He has directed tours of *Some of My Best Friends Are the Blues* starring Della Reese; *Soul Survivor* starring Ted Lange; and *Achieving the Dream* starring Yolando King, daughter of Martin Luther King Jr. He has directed productions at The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, The National Black Theatre Festival in North Carolina, and Off Broadway at the Henry Street Settlement, AMAS Theatre, and the famed Apollo Theatre in Harlem. His most recent work as a playwright is *Rejoice! A Musical Celebration*, produced during the 2016 holiday season at The Willingham Theater in Yadkinville, North Carolina, where he has been artistic director for the past seven years.

Thompson has been deeply involved in education, teaching subjects ranging from literature and poetry, urban and ethnic studies to speech, theater, dance and multicultural philosophy. He is a professor at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where he is chair of the Screenwriting Department in the School of Filmmaking.

He just celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with Cle Thompson, noted jazz vocalist. They recently documented their lives together in the musical dramedy *The Daze of Our Lives*, which highlighted their daughter, Ashley, and grandchildren, Magnus, 14, and Thaddeus, 9.

"There have been a few bumps in the road," Thompson said, "but basically life has been very good to me ... in fact, far better than I could have imagined."

## In Memoriam

### Joan Crooks

Joan Crooks died June 20, 2019, at her home. She was 71. Joan was born March 10, 1948, in Mount Vernon, a daughter to Ivan and Mildred Bunnell Crooks. Joan earned the M.S. in writing at ISU in 1988 and served as instructional assistant professor in the Department of English for 22 years. She was an accomplished poet and teacher, and she was recognized by ISU students with an Impact Award in 2017.

### John Hill, Ph.D.

John Hill, Ph.D., died December 1, 2018. He was 89. John was an associate professor at Illinois State University from 1962 until 1977 when he became a full professor and moved to Texas State University. At Illinois State, John served three years as assistant head of the English Department and two years as director of graduate studies. From 1975 to 1977, he was executive director of the Academic Affairs Conference of Midwestern Universities.



For more information, visit  
[Homecoming.IllinoisState.edu](http://Homecoming.IllinoisState.edu)



# ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

*Illinois' first public university*

Department of English  
Campus Box 4240  
Normal, IL 61790-4240

This document is available in alternative formats upon request by contacting the Department of English at (309) 438-3667.  
An equal opportunity/affirmative action university encouraging diversity University Marketing and Communications 20-12361 printed on recycled paper ♻️

## YES, I SUPPORT REDBIRDS RISING!

### GIFT DESIGNATION

- ENGLISH DEPARTMENT EXCELLENCE FUND (4245234)
- LENSKI LECTURE SERIES (4245527)
- ENGLISH FACULTY RESEARCH (4245967)
- DAVID FOSTER WALLACE MEMORIAL FUND (4245681)
- ENGLISH ADVISORY BOARD SCHOLARSHIP (4245000)

### PAYMENT OPTIONS

\_\_\_ **OPTION 1:** Check. A check for my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ payable to Illinois State University Foundation is enclosed.

\_\_\_ **OPTION 2:** Credit Card:

- VISA  MASTERCARD  DISCOVER  AMERICAN EXPRESS
- A single gift in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- A recurring gift in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_, ending on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (month/day/year), to be paid:  monthly  quarterly  semiannually  annually

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name on card

\_\_\_\_\_  
Account number

\_\_\_\_\_  
CVV

\_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_ **OPTION 3:** Make a gift online at [English.IllinoisState.edu/about/MakeAGift](http://English.IllinoisState.edu/about/MakeAGift).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name(s) University ID (if known)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State ZIP

\_\_\_\_\_  
Preferred email address

( )  mobile  home

\_\_\_\_\_  
Preferred phone number

*Please mail this form to:  
Illinois State University Foundation  
Campus Box 8000  
Normal, IL 61790-8000*

Office use only:  
AG00000000 2020002424 43



[RedbirdsRising.IllinoisState.edu](http://RedbirdsRising.IllinoisState.edu)