

Spring 2017 Newsletter

Alumni Achievements

This year our alumni have accomplished a great deal. We've had several books published. **Matt Mullins ('12)** published *Postmodernism in Pieces*. **Jackie Grutsch McKinney ('03)** co-authored *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors*. **Warren Rochelle ('97)** published his fourth novel: *The Werewolf and His Boy*.

Several new job placements also took place this year. **Andrew Pisano ('14)** is now an Assistant Professor of English and Writing Center Coordinator at the University of South Carolina Union. **Courtney Wooten ('14)** is the Book Review Editor for *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, a job she took over from **Jacob Babb ('13)** who is being promoted to Associate Editor. Babb also received the *IU Southeast Trustees Teaching Award* (2016). Another award winner, **Heidi Hanrahan ('05)**, will be receiving the *Storer College Faculty Award*.

Letter from the Director

Dear Alumni, Faculty, Staff, and Friends:

I am happy to announce our first Graduate Program Newsletter! We hope to keep you all updated on the exciting things happening in the graduate program and the accomplishments of our distinguished alumni. We also hope that you will tell us what you are doing! I can think of no better way to begin such an enterprise than with Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater's reflections below. After all, reflecting in writing makes up such a big part of what we do. I hope you all are doing well, and I hope to hear from you with updates about all the exciting things in your lives.

All the Best,

Jen Feather
Director of Graduate Studies

Clearing Out: Plop, Plop, Plop

Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater

Applebee to Zebroski in a large metal file cabinet of articles alphabetically organized. Plop. Plop Plob they go, into the waste basket, file folder after file folder of significant readings in rhetoric, composition, creative non-fiction, language studies, English education and women's and gender studies. Plop to James Britton, to Janet Emig, to Peter Elbow, to James Moffatt, to Howard Zinsser. How pleased I was to open the file drawers and say to a student, "I think you should read Shirley Brice Heath's, "What No Bedtime Story Means", and pull it out of the H folder and hand it over. Roland Barthes? David Bartholomae? Ann Berthoff? James Berlin? Patricia Bizzell, David Bleich. All online now. No longer a need for these carefully collected and arranged journal articles. Plop, Plop, Plop.

A happy thought occurs as I clean out these folders: I have read all of these articles and studies at one point. They have shaped who I have been as a professional, as an English and Women's and Gender Studies now Emerita professor. So many innovative thinkers. Such rich studies. I make a neat pile of my own published work, journal articles on collaboration, on being a WPA, on ethnography and literacy, on gender issues. My favorite article, never included in my tenure or full professor file, "Reading to Mr. Bear," a study of what pre-reading strategies middle class children bring to the process of learning to read. All of those articles and studies, now too, online.

And then come the books in my office. Hundreds and hundreds of books randomly arranged in big grey metal book cases. Winnowing books is a difficult task because they are the center of my life as an English professor. First the keepers. There are so many I can't give up, from the popular, *You Just Don't Understand* by Deborah Tannen, used in the first course I ever taught to the esoteric, Lafcadio Hearn's *America, an nineteenth century folklorist and ethnographer*. Books that I love because of their risky

language such as Hurston's *Mules and Men* or Anzaldula's *Borderlands*. Books that I admire for their intellectual insights like Vygotsky, I.A. Richards, Freire. Books that shake up one's perspective on race and gender such as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* or Royster's *Traces of a Stream*. Or Cornell West's *Race Matters*. So many, many more. Books that feel and smell good. Books paperback and hardback. Old books like John Dewey's and new books such as Krista Radcliff's. Books that shape a person in a particular time and place.

Next there are books that influenced particular courses I offered over twenty years. Courses on reading theory developed around Rosenblatt and Frank Smith. Courses on gender that are planned around Ronald and Richie's *Available Means*. Courses on ethnography that highlight Ruth Behar's *Translated Woman and feminist perspectives on fieldworking*. Courses on rhetoric that center around Burke's ideas and civic rhetoric. Courses on the teaching of writing that always incorporate books on revision by my late mentor, Donald Murray. Courses on creative non-fiction such as Anne LaMott's *Bird by Bird*. Every time a fresh new text arrived in the mail, I would think about what course might be shaped around it. I always expect my students to buy books and bring them to class. I recall an embarrassing incident for me recently when I asked a student staring at his cellphone where his text of Stephen King's *On Writing* was. He pointed to his cellphone. "Here," he said, "online."

Reluctantly, I make a pile of giveaways to place in the hallway with the sign, "Free Books." These include all the books that the used bookseller who I call the "mouse" won't buy back. There are anthologies of short stories, poetry, nonfiction essays. There are doubles: Joe Harris's *Rewriting*, bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*. There are outdated books on composition pedagogy that I find difficult to let go of. There are out of print books and even popular books from the All Freshman Reads by many Southern authors, Lee Smith, Kaye Gibbons, and Daniel Wallace.

My favorite Freshman Read book was *MACNOLIA* by Van Jordan who wrote a narrative poetry collection about an African American girl who was tripped up from winning a district spelling bee because the judges gave her a word not on the list because they didn't want a black girl to win. As the

then director of the writing program, I relish memories of all the freshmen students sitting in a large auditorium holding their hard back books, turning the pages as Van Jordan read and then waiting in line for hours to get their books signed. As the free books stack diminishes over time, only the most unloved books remain—out of date dictionaries and textbooks. I receive thanks from grad students who are eager to start their own libraries.

The hardest part of clearing out comes with the bound shelf of dissertations. How can I really throw these out? I know, I know I say to myself: they are all online. But graduate students, some of which are now full professors themselves, struggled to get their dissertations completed and often gave me a copy to remind us both of how significant the writing of a dissertation really is. There is the first dissertation I directed by Lee Torda, *Reading in the Writing Classroom: Developing Critical Literacy* and the last by Liz Vogel, *What We Talk About when we Talk about Emotion: The Rhetoric of Redemption in Composition Studies*. There's the dissertation on memory: *Rememored Knowing: A Feminist Interpretation of the Canon of Memory* by Katie Ryan who is the most published of our graduate students. Probably my favorite of all those studies I chaired is Jackie Grutsch McKinney's study *Armored Lives: Tracing the Obligation of Self Defense*, a topic so timely today as everyone arms themselves against one another. So many others who wrote draft after draft until they got it right, some from the school of education and a few from nursing. There is an intellectual excitement in working so closely with another person's ideas and seeing them through. But plop, plop, plop, out they go.

As I finally clear out after stripping my walls of posters, wall hangings, a copper image of Minerva, photographs of my daughters, a calendar made by male graduate student as pinups, and my prize bobble head of myself, I look out of my coveted office window and wonder who will move in next. What books will replace my relics of a professional life? I hope I leave good karma. It has been a wonderful journey and a great privilege. And so off to turn in my keys and take my experiences with me.

Alumni Spotlight: Lee Templeton



Lee Templeton received his PhD from UNCG in 2006 and is an Associate Professor of English at North Carolina Wesleyan College. His dissertation, *Unmanned Countenances: Grief, Masculinity, and Identity in Middle English Literature*, was the beginning of his current project, a collection of essays entitled *Knowing Sorrow: Grief, Gender, and Identity in the Middle Ages*. After presenting on *Sir Orfeo* and masculine grief at a Southeastern Medieval Association conference, Templeton decided to pursue the topic further with an edited collection. “I thought doing an edited collection would be interesting because I could draw different approaches to this idea of grief, but also not just focus on masculinity, but focus on gender more broadly and across a range of texts that I don’t have that much experience with,” said Templeton. He hopes that the edition will be as interdisciplinary as possible. The expected publication date is sometime between the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018. Templeton states that one of the most enjoyable aspects of working on this project has been the collaboration and learning from his contributors.

This is one of the biggest projects that Templeton says he has worked on. Teaching has always been Templeton’s main priority. Wesleyan’s focus is also on teaching (professors operate on a 4x4 course load and publications are not necessary for advancement). “It’s odd to have this much focus on my scholarly work.” Teaching at a school like Wesleyan (a private liberal arts college with affiliations with the Methodist church) appealed to Templeton who attended a similar college, Florida Southern College, for his undergraduate degree. “I knew that I wanted to be in a similar place and work closely with students; undergraduates in particular.” Templeton states that UNCG helped him figure out what kind of teacher he wanted to be. “At UNCG, they don’t separate the literature students and the rhetoric students,” Templeton explains, “they definitely think about teaching pedagogies more and in different ways.”

Continuing with his passion for teaching, Templeton is presenting at the International Congress on Medieval Studies this year on teaching the Norse Eddas through Tolkien. He plans on taking the comments and suggestions from the conference and applying them to his upcoming course on the Icelandic Sagas.

One of the attractive things about UNCG, according to Templeton, is that the English department felt very welcoming and that being able to interact with the faculty was really appealing. “While there may have been other institutions that probably were better well known for their programs in medieval lit, when I balanced that against the other qualities that UNCG had, I knew I could be more successful at UNCG.”

Upcoming Events

- Thursday, April 13, 7:00 PM (UNCG Faculty Center)

Heather Hartley, poetry reading and book signing

- Thursday, April 20, 2:00-3:30 pm (MHRA— Room 2711)

Presentation by **Henry Sussman**: Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Yale University.

- Friday, May 12, 10:00 AM (Greensboro Coliseum)

Commencement (Speaker: Margot Lee Shetterly—author of *Hidden Figures*)



The PhD in English received official approval in December of 1967, and we had our first bulletin year in 1968. You are part of what has made our first 50 years so exceptional. On October 13, we celebrated the milestone by holding an alumni panel entitled “How Education Shapes More than Our Minds: Alumni Speak about Intellectual Formation.” The panelists shared how education shaped them, not only as professionals, but also as human beings. Daniel Burns (PhD ‘15) introduced the four panelists: Matthew Mullins (Assistant Professor of English at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of *Postmodernism in Pieces*—PhD ‘12), Matthew McNess (Author of *Sport Philosophy Now*, an original work of philosophy—PhD ‘11), Joseph George (Lecturer at UNCG and author of *Postmodern Suburban Spaces: Philosophy, Ethics, and Community in Post-War American Fiction*—PhD ‘13), and Travis Mulhauser (Author of *Sweetgirl*, which has been listed for The Center for Fiction’s First Novel Prize, was an Indie Next Pick, and named one of Ploughshares Best Books of the New Year—MFA ‘02). Along with the panel, two

awards were presented for the first time. *The Keith Cushman Graduate Prize for Scholarly Publication*, given to a graduate student whose scholarly article has been published or has been accepted for publication in a well-established, peer-reviewed journal, was received by Kristy Crawley. Also, *The James Evans Award for Graduate Service*, awarded to a graduate student who has distinguished



themselves through service to the English graduate student body and the Department, was received by to Gia Coturri Sorenson.

Keep an eye out for your invitation to our next 50th Anniversary event!

Congratulations to our Graduates

Spring 2016

Receiving a Phd:

- Michael Bedsole; Anthony Cuda, chair
Dissertation: ***"I who am here dissembled": Exteriority in T.S. Eliot and His Modernist Contemporaries***
- Sonya Elise Blades; Robert Langenfeld, chair
Dissertation: ***A Satire of Their Own: Subjectivity, Subversion, and the Rewriting of Literary History***
- Matthew Charles Carter; Jennifer Feather, chair
Dissertation: ***Discovering the Kinetic Language of Violence on the Early Modern Stage***
- Melissa Ridley Elmes; Amy Vines, chair
Dissertation: ***Negotiating Violence at the Feast in Medieval British Texts***
- Kathleen Fowler; Christopher Hodgkins, chair
Dissertation: ***The Anatomy of Joy: Transforming Perceptions of Mysticism in the Early Modern Period***
- Emily Hall; Ben Clarke and Jennifer Keith, co-chairs
Dissertation: ***Rejecting the Empowered Reader: Reclaiming Authorial Agency in Twenty-First Century Avant-Garde Fiction***
- Alison M. Johnson; Noelle Morrissette, chair
Dissertation: ***Herstories of War: Representations of Silence in Women's Vietnam/America War Narratives***
- Kathleen T. Leuschen; Nancy Myers, chair
Dissertation: ***The Literacy Practices of Feminist Consciousness Raising: An Argument for Remembering and Recitation***
- Chelsea Skelley; Stephen Yarbrough, chair
Dissertation: ***Interfaces & Interfacing: Posthuman Ecologies and Identity in a Posthuman Age***
- Sally Lynn Smits Masten; Karen Kilcup, chair
Dissertation: ***Reworking the Garden: Revisions of the Pastoral Tradition in Twentieth-Century Southern Poetry***

Receiving an MA

Farris Lee Francis, Teaching Composition Plan
Sara Elizabeth Heckler, Teaching Composition Plan
Luciana Dionne Lilley, Teaching Composition Plan
Christina Irene Murrell, Teaching Composition Plan
Matthew Michael Phillips, Thesis Plan
Molly Marcia Taylor, Teaching Composition Plan

Fall 2016

Receiving a PhD

- Sara Boissonneau; Maria Sanchez, chair
Dissertation: ***Other Americans: The Racialized and Anachronized Appalachian Mountaineer at the Turn of the Twentieth Century***

Receiving an MA

Michelle Danner, Thesis Plan