

Department of English Graduate Student Newsletter

Letter From the Director of Graduate Studies

July 10, 2002

Dear Graduate Students,

Once again the summer finds a good many people finishing their degree programs, including five Ph.D.s: Kim Bell (Medieval Literature), Michelle Eble (Rhet/Comp), Sandy Matthews (Rhet/Comp), René Saldaña (Fiction), and Mohammed Sharaf (American Romanticism). All of these good people have jobs and, because of their dissertation projects, excellent career opportunities ahead of them.

Building a career truly starts in graduate school, and it is important to remember that your goal is not to remain a graduate student but to set out on a road to be the best teacher, departmental colleague, writer, and scholar that you can become. One thing I have learned in the last two years is that there are many ways to translate or construe experience as achievement, but these transformations require, of course, that you make more of your experience than simply experience. All who go out into the academic job market have essentially identical experience: they have all taken classes, written papers, taught courses, passed examinations, and organized and completed a substantial dissertation. But what can you claim as “achievement” in the course of such experience? You can make your teaching duties demonstrably effective for the students you teach. You might make original judgments and discoveries in your course work. You could revise and publish essays derived from class papers and even from later reflection on texts, cultural matters, or your own personal experience. You could write an astute review of an important new book. And you can perceive that your dissertation project opens a door into a series of interesting and valuable projects that you will have to pass on to

other students because you cannot possibly live long enough to do them all.

But what about one of the most important credentials in getting a job? Most departments are very much aware that they are hiring a colleague with whom they hope to work productively for many years. Can you provide evidence that you are a good citizen in the academic community where you have trained? I think you can, especially if you have worked voluntarily in the many projects that our Graduate English Association has created and hopes to carry out each year, such as: book sales that raise money for the annual essay and creative writing cash prizes; the organization of informal seminars on taking examinations, attending conferences, publishing papers, writing the dissertation, and entering the job market; and the management of its annual graduate student conference. There are other ways to involve yourself in the life of the department, sometimes through holding a GRA that brings you in touch with several faculty members and other students. I hope you will all find some time to help with some of these projects, though I know how limited your free time can be. I promise you that it will be worth the effort.

If you’ve prowled the department this summer you may have noticed the renovations going on in the space formerly occupied by the Writing Cen-

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ter. Workmen have just this week put up a wall that creates a very nice, large, window-lighted space for a Commons Room where graduate students and faculty can actually have sufficient space to have conversations over coffee or bag lunches. Thus, we have not lost the kind of center for conversation that the old Writing Center's round table represented; instead, I hope we have gained a space where students and faculty can have somewhat more opportunity for collegiality. If you have ideas about this space, let me know. Doing so productively will, in fact, be one of those résumé items that could show another department that you are indeed a promising colleague as well as a promising teacher.

On the same topic, most of you know that professional associations and author societies often offer less expensive memberships to active graduate students. Joining several of these, lurking on their web sites, attending their meetings, and reading their journals is another way to show both professional achievement and potential for being a good colleague. Some of the author societies give grants for students to present papers at major conferences, and many associations and societies provide cash prizes and valuable professional recognition for papers published in their journals. You should spend a certain amount of time each month walking the journal stacks in the GSU and Emory libraries, perusing journals to find out about such opportunities and also to keep informed about changes in scholarship and scholarly writing.

The Modern Language Association has in recent years directed a good bit of attention to the problems graduate students in literature face on the job market, and, while I think there are some flaws in the MLA's philosophy about job markets, I want to pass on a summary of remarks sent out to MLA members by the well-known scholar and the organization's president, Stephen Greenblatt. Greenblatt is urging MLA



members to educate promotion and tenure committees at their institutions regarding the current difficulty young scholars may have in publishing books derived from their dissertations or even their later research. "We are concerned," he writes, "because people who have spent years of professional training—our students, our colleagues—are at risk. Their careers are in jeopardy, and higher education stands to lose, or at least severely to damage, a generation of young scholars." The causes of this are several, he argues, and many are economic. With current budget restraints on many campuses, venues for publications have in some cases diminished; library budgets have been cut so that university presses, also under budget constraints, frequently feel they cannot publish as many books as they would prefer. The widespread practice in promotion and tenure decisions of depending upon a "book" as an absolute requirement for job security and advancement in the profession, Greenblatt points out, leaves many young scholars in jeopardy against an inflexible deadline, "no matter how strong or serious their scholarly achievement, because academic presses simply cannot afford to publish their books."

Greenblatt urges departments to reconsider their promotion policies, one facet of which would be to cease depending upon the referees of university presses to evaluate candidates for tenure and take upon ourselves, as faculty, the kind of consideration that would fairly access a young scholar's promise.

Greenblatt's perception of problems in the profession, like many that attract MLA's attention, is very much restricted to a very small part of the job market: the research university, which makes up about nine per cent of American institutions of higher learning and represents about thirty per cent of the job market. Seventy per cent of the job market is in two- and four-year institutions, where the major criteria for advancement are almost universally

good teaching, good academic citizenship, and a strong interest in students. These institutions do not discourage scholarship and creativity, but they also do not use the outside evaluation of faculty in refereed situations as the only means of evaluating a prospective colleague. Students who have graduated with Ph.D.s from our department who have taken jobs in such institutions seem truly happy and have had very rewarding careers, without many of the pressures of the research institution. They have not given up keeping current in their fields, but they have given up the somewhat deleterious division of labor that exists in research departments. They have in some cases re-invented themselves; they have taken students on exciting trips afield; they have started magazines and new sub-programs, all frequently outside the specialties on which they have written dissertations. I frequently find their careers enviable.

I mention all this to suggest realism and common sense in expectations for your eventual job search and career planning. I have very similar feelings about taking the Ph.D. into the secondary school system, which many of our excellent students often do; they also have rewarding, interesting careers, good colleagues, a place in a real educational community, and a variety of opportunities to re-invent themselves and change the lives of young people.

I wish all of you a pleasant summer, which I hope includes some leisure for wider reading, and another excellent year.

All best,

Tom McHaney

Director of Graduate Studies



News & Notes

Georgia State University's Creative Writing Program made a strong showing at the Agnes Scott competition this year: **Katie Chapel** won for poetry; **Gregg Johnson**, **Heather Russel**, and **Mike Watchey** were fiction finalists. Each finalist's story was published in this year's festival magazine.

Ernelle Fife is attending the four-week "Medicine, Literature, and Culture" Summer Institute, hosted by Pennsylvania's Hershey Medical Center and College of Medicine. The Institute, which is sponsored by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, includes six to eight hours of discussion and classes each day, five days a week, with additional "clinicals," during which each student may attend case conferences, lectures, or Grand Rounds. With the right wind, Ernie says, she can smell chocolate in the air.

The Agnes Scott Writer's Festival has selected **Andrew Hill's** story, "Fear of Niggers," as winner in its fiction category.

Stuart Noel, faculty member at Georgia Perimeter College, presented in April at The University System of Georgia's 26th Annual Learning Support Conference. Noel also presented at the Georgia Conference on College and University Teaching in February at Kennesaw State University. This summer, he will be teaching in London (Study Abroad) at the University of Surrey-Roehampton for five weeks.

Heather Russel's short story, "Watch," was a finalist in the 2002 Agnes Scott Writers' Festival Contest. Another of Russel's short stories, "The Save," was a finalist for the Raymond Carver Short Story Award, and was published in *Cave Magazine* (Volume 3, Number 2; March 2002).

"**Claire Summers'** paper, 'The Establishment Prevails: Guyon's Destruction of the Bower of Bliss,' argued that the falseness of the Bower contradicts a specific 'Christian' ideal that pervades Guyon's consciousness: nature must be divinely created and subsequently, regenerative. Yet, the Bower is not only expert artifice[;] it exists for pleasure for its own sake.... However, although the Bower consists of artificial naturalism and only simulates the regenerative powers of nature, it remains a closed, plastic system and a harmless anomaly.... Guyon's intrusion is gratuitous because the Bower of Bliss will never contain progressive action in the normal

sense[;] it is a separate, disembodied system that exists only for its own purposes and poses no threat to those willing to forego it.”

From “Article Notices,” *The Spenser Review* 32:3 (2001), 38.

Stewart Whittemore received the 2002 Society for Technical Communication Teaching Fellowship for Practicing Professionals for teaching Business Writing.

GEA Listserv

Remember to subscribe to the Graduate English Association’s listserv by sending an email message with a blank subject line to: <listproc@sphinx.gsu.edu>

In the body of the message, write, “subscribe GEA-L <your name>.” If you do not include your name, you will receive an error message. Once you are on the list, you may post messages by addressing them to <GEA-L@listproc.gsu.edu>.

The department regularly posts job announcements, conference notices, information about poetry and fiction readings, and other things of interest to graduate students.

Fall 2002 Course Descriptions

FOLK 6020, America’s Folk Crafts
(MW 5:30–6:45 p.m.) Dr. Burrison

This is the least literary of the courses in our Folklore Curriculum, representing the 1970s shift in American folklore study’s emphasis from oral literature to material culture. For those of you wishing a refreshing break from your mainstream studies, this may be a good thing, but the course still has a literary application: identification of vernacular architecture, crafts, and food traditions in American literature (e.g., Herman Melville’s description of the whaling folk art of scrimshaw in *Moby Dick*). Illustrated with examples of folk artifacts as well as slides and videos, this is also the most

philosophical and theoretical of the Folk courses, with much time devoted to defining folk art and relationships among the folk, popular, and academic streams of our culture.

Website Addresses

Department of English

<www.gsu.edu/~wwweng>

Rhetoric and Composition

<rhetcomp.gsu.edu>

Five Points

<webdelsol.com/Five_Points>

Studies in the Literary Imagination

www.gsu.edu/~wwwsli

ENGL 8894: The Child and Family in Modern Literature (Th 4:30–7:00 p.m.) Dr. Chase

In this course we will examine the varied and changing representations of family relations (parent-child, couples, siblings, and traditional and nontraditional familial networks) in selected twentieth-century novels and essays. The course also includes a general introduction to the range of critical studies devoted to understanding the vast fascination with childhood as portrayed in fiction. In reading these texts we will draw from psychological and family systems theories and from the work of historians and social critics in exploring themes such as loyalty, responsibility, trust and betrayal, attachment, belonging, abuse and neglect, alcoholism, autonomy, and intimacy. We will read works by Henry James, J. D. Salinger, Toni Morrison, Joyce Carol Oates, Michael Cunningham, and others. Films, personal family stories, and published memoirs will help us address this topic of modern and postmodern family life in a vital and interesting way.



Let Us Know

Has your mailing address, telephone number, or email address changed recently? If so, please call or email Tammy Cole with the updated information: 404-651-2900; engtsc@gsu.edu.

Spring 2002 Degree Recipients

Christy Lakeisha Harris, MA
 Crystal Starr Hobart, MA
 Erik Juergensmeyer, MA
 Jennifer Thomson Lawrence, MA
 David Robert Marado, MA
 Laura Ann Marshburn, MA
 Brandon Clay Rogers, MA
 Laura Lynn Shauger, MA

Michael Kenneth Sugarman, MA
 David Grant Thomson, MA
 Natalie Collins Trice, MA
 Marne Lynne Vanyo, MA
 Sharon McCune, MFA
 Michael Watchey, MFA
 Jonathan Richard Hershey, PhD

Exam Dates



MA: Saturday, October 5, 2002, 9:00 a.m., Troy Moore Library

PhD/MFA Specialist:

Saturday, October 19, 2002, 9:00 a.m., Troy Moore Library

PhD/MFA Non-specialist:

Saturday, October 26, 2002, 9:00 a.m., Troy Moore Library

Projected Fall 2002 Course Schedule

ENGL	Comp. #	Course Title	Instructor	Day(s)	Time
8000	81254	BIBLIO AND RESEARCH METHODS	Schmidt	TR	04:00pm-5:15
8020	81255	POETRY WRITING	Bottoms	S	09:00am-11:30am
8030	81256	FICTION WRITING	Joseph, S.	T	04:30pm-07:00pm
8060	83659	LITERARY CRITICISM	Schmidt	TR	01:00pm-02:15pm
8065	83660	FOUND OF MODERN CRITICL THEORY	Thomas, C.	T	07:15pm-09:45pm
8100	81257	DIRECTED INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH	McHaney, T.	--	TBA
8115	83651	TECHNICAL WRITING	Gu	TR	11:00am-12:15pm
8123	83652	DIGITAL RHETORIC	Pullman	TR	08:00am-09:15am
8125	83650	WRITING & RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	Lopez	TR	01:00pm-02:15pm
8180	83798	COMPOSITION THEORY	Gaillet	F	09:00am-11:30am
8230	83669	AMERICAN ENGLISH	Zeigler	MW	05:30pm-06:45pm
8250	83643	MIDDLE ENGLISH	Lightsey	TR	02:30pm-03:45pm
8310	83666	EARLY & MIDDLE 17TH-C ENG LIT	Dobranski	TR	09:30am-10:45am
8360	83667	SHAKESPEARE, EARLIER WORK	Hirsh	TR	07:15pm-08:30pm
8430	83671	LATER 18TH-CENTURY LIT	Snow	TR	11:00am-12:15pm
8650	83670	19TH-CENTURY BRITISH FICTION	Richardson	TR	05:30pm-06:45pm
8750	83653	20TH-CENTURY ENGLISH PROSE	Malamud	MW	12:00pm-01:15pm
8810	83654	AMERICAN POETRY 20TH CENTURY	Gyls	MW	07:15pm-08:30pm
8840	85016	AMERICAN REAL & NAT, 1865-1914	Gabler-Hover	MW	01:30pm-02:45pm
8860	83663	MODERN AMER FICT, 1900-1945	Carr	M	04:30pm-07:00pm
8870	83672	CONT AMER FIC, 1946-PRESENT	Denard	M	07:15pm-09:45pm
8894	83665	T CHILD & FAMILY IN MODERN LIT	Chase	R	04:30pm-07:00pm
8900	83655	T THE WRITING CENTER	Singer	W	01:00pm-03:30pm
8999	81258	THESIS RESEARCH	Roudané	--	TBA
9030	81259	NON-THESIS INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH	Roudané	--	TBA
FOLK 6020	83675	AMERICA'S FOLK CRAFTS	Burrison	MW	5:30pm-6:45pm

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