2014-2015 Letter from the Chair

It’s been an exciting year for the English Department as we’ve settled into the new Liberal Arts Building in which we’ve been able to build new connections. We’ve wandered over to the library and had librarians visit us; we’ve been able to hear about the scholarship and creative work of our neighbors in the departments of History, Philosophy, Women and Gender Studies, and Modern Languages and Cultures. As I’ve made my way through our new space, I’ve enjoyed the chance to see so many of our students making good use of actual places to sit—especially on the balcony!

While the new building has been a big change, we’ve continued to focus on our core mission of teaching and building knowledge in literary studies, creative writing, and film studies. Essentially, we challenge students to consider the opportunities that studying “English,” in its various forms, presents: What does literature—the reading and writing of it—tell us about human experiences? And which experiences are told, which silenced? What are the possibilities of the forms of expression? At the heart of our collective enterprise is an impulse to explore how words build our world and how they can re-build that world as values, thoughts, and experiences—that is, knowledge—grow.

This year faculty and students have had a number of opportunities to meet and engage with questions in the discipline. The Writers Forum, the “From the Writers Forum Archives” film showing, Scholars Day, the first-ever English Graduate Symposium SEGue, the Mediterranean Passages Symposium, the “Crossing Borders” Film Series, the Jigsaw launch party—these events and many others have provided room for intellectual inquiry beyond the classroom.

I am grateful for the alumni and friends who have helped encourage our students. Five alums came to campus in the fall to talk about their experiences in the work place, and generous donors have funded three new major awards for English majors: the Harvey A. Dorfman ’57 Scholarship, the Lena Sunseri Piedmont ’34 Scholarship, and the Ruth Donahue Maurer ’53 Scholarship. Gifts of time and money both significantly support our students as they expand their capabilities and work toward their goals.

As we do every year, we welcomed new faces, both students and instructors, in the fall and winter, and, as we move toward another commencement weekend, we prepare to say goodbye to those who are moving out of our immediate community, to their own opportunities. We hope those who leave will stay in touch.

Happy summer!

Jennifer Haytock
Chair, English Department
Welcome to the new home of the English Department! The Liberal Arts Building (LAB) opened its doors for academic business in Fall 2014. The LAB is home to four other academic departments—History, Modern Languages and Cultures, Philosophy, and Women & Gender Studies. High ceilings and works of art give students an open and interesting space in which to attend class. Included is a tiered 200 seat divisible auditorium and a gallery that houses the e.e. Cummings collection. Most loved are the balconies that provide a great view with fresh air and a perfect spot for conversation or study, as well as the enclosed bridge that connects the LAB to Drake Memorial Library. New classroom technology and the easy reconfiguration of seating arrangements provide classes with the ability to create their own unique style for their class set up. The building also achieved Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification with a bio-retention pond, sun shading devices, bird friendly design applications, and furniture made from trees that were on site.
The English department faculty have been busy this year with research, grants, awards, and publications. Congratulations to everyone on their achievements and endeavors!

Mike Chojnowski received the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Adjunct Teaching 2015.

Greg Garvey has two publications at the proofing stage: “Democratic Hopes and Majoritarian Fears: Emerson as a Man on the Street in the Election of 1834” in a politics anthology on recent theories of democratic citizenship (Wayne State UP); and a pedagogical essay titled “Hawthorne’s Demanding Skepticism” in a volume titled Hawthorne in the College Classroom (Ohio State UP). He is also signed on to organize a selection of panels on Narrative and Human Rights at the Society for Utopian Studies Fall, 2015 conference.

Jennifer Haytock is presenting by invitation her paper “Larsen’s Brian Redfield: The African American War Veteran in Passing” at the Society for the Study of Midwestern Writers at the end of May.

Alissa Karl recently co-edited the special issue of Textual Practice on “Neoliberalism and the Novel.” She also wrote the essay “The Zero Hour of the Neoliberal Novel,” included in the issue, and co-authored the critical introduction.

Anne Panning published her creative nonfiction essay “Bats” in River Teeth. She has also been asked to write a review of the memoir, The Circus Train, written by a late Brockport professor, Judith Kitchen.


Tate Shaw had exhibitions on display in both Ohio and San Francisco this winter. He also recently spoke at a symposium at the San Francisco Art Institute and is teaching a workshop at the Paper & Book Intensive.
Dr. Miriam Burstein is a 19th century Victorian scholar and professor at the College at Brockport.

Recent Publication

She most recently published the book, *Victorian Reformations: Historical Fiction and Religious Controversy*, 1820-1900 with Notre Dame Press. Her book analyzes how Christian novelists amongst multiple denominations staked a claim to the religious historical novel to provide narratives concerning the after effects of the Catholic Emancipation of 1829. A review by Carol Engelhardt Herringer of Wright State University states that Burstein "persuasively shows how non-canonical Victorian historical novels offer essential insights into the shaping and importance of Victorian religious debates... her book is a significant work for those who are interested in Victorian literature and Victorian religion, as well as the intersection of the two.”

Early Influences

When asked if there was a specific book that sparked the literary scholar within, Dr. Burstein refers to her childhood favorite, *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. This book was so well loved and read so often by her that its pages were destroyed! Dr. Burstein’s interest in literature and academics began at home, where her mother introduced her to classics such as *A Study in Scarlet* and *Swiss Family Robinson*, and she watched her father read and write as a professor and historian.

Research Travels

Her research has led her to London, where she will travel again this summer to conduct research at the British Library. She has frequented UCLA often due to the large collection of Victorian fiction housed there, but other cities in the US have archives that Dr. Burstein has used as well.

Favorite Quotation

“I will not go down to posterity talking bad grammar” - Benjamin Disraeli.

Outside of Academia

In her spare time, you can find Dr. Burstein walking outside or building dollhouses. We asked what she enjoys reading for pleasure and she told us she gravitates toward contemporary fiction and her last read was Dan Simmons’ *The Fifth Heart*. 
The College at Brockport’s English Department alumni and students have accomplished numerous achievements this year!

Nancy Caronia completed an edited collection with Edvige Giunta titled *Personal Effects: Essays on Memoir, Culture, and Teaching in the Work of Louise DeSalvo* (Fordham University Press.) She will receive her PhD in English at the University of Rhode Island this spring.

Thomas Cotsonas won the St. Lawrence Book Award with his short story collection, *Nominal Cases*.

Christina Cretelle has been accepted into RIT’s MBA program.

Amalia Dache-Gerbino graduated from the Warner School at the University of Rochester and won the Dissertation of the Year Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). She is a tenure-track assistant professor at the University of Missouri.

Ciarrai Donnelly has been awarded a summer internship at the Frick Museum in New York City.

Silas Hansen has been hired as an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Ball State University.

Stephanie Harris has been accepted to the University of Southern Mississippi. She attributes her success to Brockport professors who gave her the encouragement and guidance she needed to realize her academic achievements and whose enthusiasm and passion to revitalize her interest.

Kathryn O’Toole recently accepted an offer from the PhD program in English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She intends to work in Old English/Medieval Studies. Kathryn received stipends from both the Medieval Studies program and the English Department, and will receive start up funds for her work.

Christian Wessels has had a poem accepted for publication in The Allegheny Review. He also received the Summer Undergraduate Research Internship to work with Jennifer Haytock on An Introduction to American War Literature.

**Jigsaw & English Club**

This year’s English Club is led by its president, Alma Hulbert. The English Club meets weekly to organize literary events such as this year’s Shakespeare’s birthday party on May 1st where games such as Cards Against Shakespeare and Pin the Ruff on Shakespeare were played. Included in the celebration was the serving of cake alongside a showing of the film *10 Things I Hate About You*, an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Along with literary events, The English Club publishes the College at Brockport’s literary magazine, *Jigsaw*. Students are given the opportunity to send in their poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, flash fiction, and artwork to the English Club which then selects which pieces they believe belong in this year’s magazine. As always, this year’s *Jigsaw* was an inspiring display of our students’ creativity. A release party that included authors from the magazine reading their work was a fantastic way to acknowledge these talented students and it displayed the community of support that exists here at the College at Brockport.
Student Recognition

Each year the English Department recognizes a Graduate Department Scholar, Department Scholar, and a recipient of the Morgan Award. We wanted to get to know these recipients and recognize their achievement here.

Barbi Clifton was recognized as the **Graduate Department Scholar** this year. She graduates this spring with a Master’s degree in English Literature. Barbi’s advanced project was on “the role of the literary witch as a signifier of 20th-century female transformation” in Children’s and Young Adult literature. This proved fascinating on how the concept of the witch has created and reinforced gender stereotypes. Barbi enjoys her spare time with her family and friends, seeing movies and golfing with her two sons. She has also coined “Netflixing” as a verb to describe her Netflix watching!

**Christian Wessels** is this year’s English Department Scholar. His literary interests began with Joseph Brodsky’s *A Part of Speech* and John Berryman’s *The Dream Songs* which made language a passion of his. Other research interests include American war literature. In his spare time, he is teaching himself music theory. His interests also expand to the cinema and you can often find him watching the films of Jim Jarmusch (he attributes his interest in these films to [Dr. Carter Soles](#)).

**Christyn Bork** is this year’s recipient of the **Morgan Award**. Christyn’s interest in nineteenth-century British literature began with reading Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* in 10th grade. Christyn’s research interests include the social commentary that exists in the novels of authors like Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen. Her literary passion transfers to the cinema as she loves movie adaptations such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Hunger Games*. Christyn is also earning her certificate in Inclusive Childhood Education.

The First Outstanding Tutor of the Year

The writing program at the Student Learning Center is a welcoming environment to students of all disciplines at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The role of the writing tutor can be anything from assisting in a brainstorming session to helping with citation for a finished paper. This year’s tutors are all graduate students—five from the English department and one from both the History and Education departments. 2015 is the first year that the Student Learning Center has given out an Outstanding Tutor of the Year Award. The recipient of this award is **Christina Hedding**, who completed her undergraduate program at the College at Brockport and is graduating this year with her Masters Degree in English. Elisabeth Gonzalez told me why Christina, a tutor since 2012, was deserving: “Christina’s exceptional work ethic, professionalism, ability to work well with others, communication skills, and tutoring strategies made her the ideal recipient.” While talking with Christina, it is obvious how much she loves her job at the writing center. Seeing students’ progress and giving them confidence in their writing abilities is what she finds most rewarding about the job. Christina’s next step after this spring’s graduation is to find employment in the educating and editing fields.
On April 8th, in the Liberal Arts Building’s new McCue Auditorium, the English National Honors Society (Sigma Tau Delta) inducted twenty three undergraduate and graduate students. The faculty sponsor of the English Honors Society, Dr. Austin Busch spoke to the students and their families, remarking that the “happiest and most rewarding moments come from working with students.” The new thoughts and perspectives students bring to discussions on books professors know well and have taught often, or an especially insightful paper is what he considers the best part of his job. The ceremony included readings of both scholarly and creative work by some of the inductees, including poems, short stories, and excerpts from graduate students’ Advanced Projects.

The following students were inducted to Sigma Tau Delta:

Wayne Alber
Arthur Brooks
Nicole Darrow
Daniel Duval
Caroline Adair Freeman
Felicia Heideman
Johnathan Klier
Sandra Parker
Kelley Scribner
Andrea Speller
Christian Wessels
Suzanne Zewan

Contessa Blosenhauer
Rachel Bundschuh
Ciarrai Donnelly
Caleb Follmer
Lisa Heath
Arielle Ingrassia
Elizabeth Oinen
Danielle Saulon
Emily Siddall
Andrea Vella
Sarah Winzenried
The Writers Forum 2014—2015

The College at Brockport’s Writers’ Forum is one of the most unique and valuable aspects of the Brockport community. This year is its 48th season and another successful one for all involved. A visiting author comes to Brockport and spends specific time with the Writers Craft class—a course open to both graduate and undergraduate students. Students read the writer’s work previous to the visit and are given time to ask questions and listen to the author speak about topics ranging from their inspiration for their work to advice on how to become published. Afterward, the class attends a reading by the author which is open to the public, followed by an open question and answer, and opportunities to speak individually with the visiting writer. This year, the College at Brockport welcomed:

Terrance Hayes, a poet whose collections of poetry, *Lighthead* and *Muscular Music*, received the National Book Award and the Kate Tufts Discovery Award respectively. *Hip Logic* was a National Poetry series winner. Hayes currently teaches English at the University of Pittsburgh.

Sven Birkerts, an essayist and author of eight books, including *The Other Walk* and *My Sky Blue Trades*. He is the editor of *AGNI*.

Stephen Schottenfeld, a newly published novelist with his first novel *Bluff City Pawn*. Stories of Schottenfeld’s have appeared in *The Gettysburg Review*, *TriQuarterly*, the *New England Review*, and others. He teaches English at the University of Rochester.

Joanie Mackowski, a poet and professor at Cornell University has two poetry collections, *The Zoo* (the winner of the AWP Award in Poetry) and *View from a Temporary Window*.

Eavan Boland, a poet and author of 10 books of poetry and a collection of essays entitled, *A Journey with Two Maps: Becoming a Woman Poet*. The Irish native has received a Lannan Foundation Award in Poetry and an American Ireland Fund Literary Award.

Tony Leuzzi, a poet and recipient of the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Creativity and Scholarship in spring 2014.

Jacinda Townsend, a novelist (*Saint Monkey*) and short fiction writer who currently teaches creative writing at Indiana University—Bloomington.

Brian Turner, a memoirist and poet who spoke about his experiences serving in the Iraq War with his memoir, *My Life as a Foreign Country*.

Suzanne Parker, a poet whose recent collection entitled *Viral* was a finalist for the 26th Annual Lambda Literary Award.

Calvin Trillin, an essayist and columnist for both *The New Yorker* and *The Nation*. Trillin has authored over 20 books and was inducted into the New York Writers Hall of Fame in 2013.
The new Liberal Arts Building inspired the creation of the Interdisciplinary Lecture Series this year! Faculty members from the humanities disciplines presented their research in their respective fields. Faculty, graduate students and advanced undergraduates were brought together for the presentations as well as questions and discussion afterward. This provided a space for intellectual connection that proved all scholars can come together, learn new things, and discover links to their own areas of study they never previously considered. What a unique and intriguing experience to combine discussions of midwifery in 19th century France with metaethics and the philosophy of science; or to consider the evolution of French hip-hop alongside the interweaving of images and texts with the topic of hydrofracking!

The names of faculty who participated and the titles of their presentations are:

**September 22, 2014**
- Austin Busch (English) “Risen Indeed? Resurrection in the Gospel of Mark”
- Brooke Conti (English) “Religious Nostalgia from Shakespeare to Milton”

**October 9, 2014**
- Rachel Linville (Modern Languages) “Preserving a Regime: Narratives and Myths of Francoism”

**Wanda Wakefield (History)** “After the Cold War: the Olympic Movement Sorts Through the Consequences”

**November 5, 2014**
- Gordon Barnes (Philosophy) “Is There a Right to Freedom?”
- Roger Kurtz (English) “Writing Wrongs: Literature, Trauma, and the African Moral Imagination”

**February 4, 2015**
- Barbara LeSavoy, Alisia Chase, & Kitty Hubbard (Women and Gender Studies) “Inside the (Laundry) Closet”

**Science, Ethic, and Practitioners: March 12, 2015**
- Joseph Long (Philosophy) “Inquiries at the Intersection of Metaethics and the Philosophy of Science”
- Morag Martin (History) “Midwives, Nuns, and Medical Students: Obstetrical Education and Its Limits in 19th Century France”

**Going below the Surface: Hip Hop and Fracking: April 2, 2015**
- Skye Paine (Modern Languages, French) “Charlie Hebdo and Hip-Hop”
- Tate Shaw (Visual Studies Workshop, English) “Notes from the Ground”

**Rereading Literary and Labor History: April 22, 2015**
- Miriam Burstein (English) “Minding the (Catholic) Gap: Catholic Novelists and the History of Nineteenth-Century Fiction”
The Writers Forum Archives allow faculty and students to revisit previous speakers that have visited the College at Brockport. On April 15, 2015 the English Department, led by Dr. Carter Soles, hosted an event which put Spike Lee’s film “Do the Right Thing” in context with the visit of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to Brockport on February 16, 1990. Dr. Althea Tait began the event with a talk entitled “Breaking Down the Walls” in which she discussed both the literal breaking down of the Berlin Wall just three months before Gates’ arrival at Brockport as well as the concept of knocking down cultural barriers. Presenting information on the history of black filmmakers and the use of these films as a combination of both art and politics, Dr. Tait spoke of Gates’ talk in which he stated the need for the decentralization of the humanities. Gates noted the importance of creating a culturally diverse discourse opposed to the white, male centered focus. In this context, the film “Do the Right Thing” was then shown and could be received on the intellectual as well as emotional level. Following the showing, Dr. Soles and Dr. Tait opened the room to questions and discussion, which included the prevalence of police brutality against black men and the movie’s reception in 1989. Participants left with a new knowledge of the world’s past and the world as we know it now.

Symposium for English Graduate Students

In the Liberal Arts Building on May 2, 2015 the English department celebrated the academic works of numerous English graduate students with the following panels presenting papers.

Interventions from the Margins

“Rosamond: Story, Legend, Myth,” Shannon Boland
“Legacies of Trauma: Transgenerational Inheritance in Harriet Jacobs’s Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,” Lisa LeFrois-Heath
“Heteroglossia and History: Julia Alvarez’s Before We Were Free in Dialogue with the Diary of Anne Frank,” Ines Gurley
“A Natural Balance: The Art & Activism of Rick Bass,” Barbi Clifton

Textual History

“Textual History Scholarship: Uncovering Literary Mysteries,” Sandra Parker
“Endearments Not For the Faint of Heart: John Donne’s ‘Love’s Exchange,’” Wayne Alber
“Textual Study of John Donne’s ‘The Will,’” Anne Hidley
Scholar’s Day 2015

A celebrated tradition for the College at Brockport is its annual Scholar’s Day. The first Scholar’s Day was in April 1984 with 66 presentations and 6 poster sessions, none of which were presented by students. This year there were 800 presenters, 98% of whom were students. This unique day allows students and faculty to engage with other disciplines, practice public presentation, and showcase their creative and scholarly work. This year, the English department included a theatre presentation of J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Hobbit, poster presentations on eighteenth-century Britain, as well as scholarly presentations on topics ranging from werewolves in Victorian literature to examinations of dystopian worlds. It was another successful Scholar’s Day for the College at Brockport: full of intellectual discussion and pride in all the work done by this year’s students.
The following have graduated with their Master of Arts degrees in the English Department in both Creative Writing and Literature tracks. Included are the titles of the Creative Writing students’ theses and the Literature students’ Advanced Projects.

**Creative Writing**

**Fall 2014**

- **Samuel Brock**: “The Red-Handed Butcher” (Director, Steve Fellner)

**Spring 2015**

- **Amanda Alers**: “Persephone” (Director, Anne Panning)
- **Julie Dryda**: “Tracing the Wind” (Director, Anne Panning)
- **Lore McSpadden**: “Hunger” (Director, Ralph Black)

**Literature**

**Fall 2014**

- **Elizabeth Oinen**: “Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Back Handed Feminism” (Director, Greg Garvey)

**Spring 2015**

- **Erin Brewer**: “Graphic Girls: Gender and Genre Bending in Persepolis and Fun Home” (Director, Kristen Proehl)
- **Barbi Clifton**: “Witch-Figuring in Children’s Literature: Moving from Patriarchal Constraint to Female Liberation” (Director, Megan Norcia)
- **Ines Gurley**: “Heteroglossia and History: Julia Alvarez’s Before We Were Free in Dialogue with the Diary of Anne Frank” (Director, Sharon Allen)
- **Christina Hedding**: “Saint Katniss: Protector of Innocence in a Dystopian World” (Director, Kristen Proehl)
- **Lisa LeFrois-Heath**: “Legacies of Trauma: Transgenerational Inheritance in Harriet Jacobs’s Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl” (Director, Janie Hinds)
- **Julie Oyer**: “Bly, Williams & Klein: Corporate Intimacy in Prose Poetry” (Director, Ralph Black)
- **Shannon Pfeifer**: “A Convent of Pleasurable Education: Margaret Cavendish’s Negotiation of Education and Marriage in the Closet Drama” (Director, Alicia Kerfoot)