

Keep-ENG in Touch

Spring 2024 ECSU English Department Newsletter



Emily Conte / 2024

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A Message From The Chair



Emily Conte / 2024

Dear alumni, current students, and friends of the English department:

On July 31st, 2023, I was sitting on my back deck contemplating the year ahead as the Associate Chair of the English department. Then-Chair Ben Pauley and I had spent the summer devising some new curricular models for the major, and I was starting to think about how the department could craft those potential models into an actual curriculum that students would find engaging and exciting.

On August 1st, I was back on my deck but now contemplating the year ahead as the de facto Chair of the English department, as Dr. Pauley had accepted a position as Interim Associate Provost and would be moving offices to the Gelsi-Young building. Suddenly, my supporting actor role had become a lead.

Okay, so in all honesty, I knew before August 1st that this would happen, but it makes for a better story the way I've told it, so I'm going to stick with it. In any case, it has turned into quite a year in the department. We have an entirely new major to implement (you can read all about it once we get our website updated!) that gives our majors more time and space to read and create stuff by implementing a slightly larger core that extends over three years and carving out space for more electives to allow each student to move through the major in ways that reflect their own interests and goals.

Last Spring, we said goodbye (sort of) to our colleague Dr. Reginald Flood, who moved over to the new Communication, Film, and Theatre department, as he found the work he was doing more closely aligned with the work in that department. He may still teach the occasional course for us. And this year, we say goodbye to Dr. Barbara Liu who is retiring (and you can read all about it in this issue).

I'd like to end this by thanking the editors of this issue, Jessica Vieira and Gabriella Beams; they have both done amazing work putting this issue together, from coming up with the initial ideas, to recruiting and working with writers, to the final design and layout. It was a real pleasure to work with them.

Congratulations to those of you graduating! Everyone, please have a wonderful summer and I hope to see you all in the fall.

Dr. Steve Ferruci
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A Legacy of Compassion: Reflections on a Distinguished Career

Marcus Grant



Dr. Barbara Liu / 2024

After a 26 year career, Dr. Barbara Liu of the English department is retiring following the close of the semester. In her time here, she has impacted countless students, forming relationships that have brought them to success—acting as a professor, program director for the liberal studies major, associate chair, and then department chair for the English department.

“I’m very proud of the fact that I’ve never stopped changing, growing, and developing as a teacher,” said Liu. “Even in this, my last semester, I’ve made changes.” During her time teaching, Liu expressed that she learns from her students, taking the time and care to ensure that they understand the content in a way meaningful to their futures and being met with compassion. To those pursuing a career educating others, she advised, “Do your best to find ways to balance rigor with compassion. It’s challenging, but it’s a challenge worth taking on.”

Thinking back on her career, Liu highlighted the “small” moments in teaching— “When a student is excited about what they’ve written, or I finally find a way to clearly explain a challenging concept, or my class seems to love a particular work of literature as much as I do.”

She recalled a particular moment in 2013, when she was asked to speak at the Honors Program’s award ceremony. Liu had taught both of the first-year writing courses required of the honors students, and they wanted to recognize her as a mentor for their later success. “Of all the things I’ve written over the years,” she said, “I’m the most proud of that speech.”

One of her former students, Liliana Baraybar, remembered Liu’s senior seminar class fondly. “Dr. Liu always made the class a wonderful experience,” Baraybar said. “She always went out of her way to make sure our voices were heard and pushed us to be the best versions of ourselves even through difficult papers and projects. She also knew that we were capable of (hard tasks), which gave me the confidence to step out of my comfort zone many times. I can’t thank her enough for that.”

As the semester comes to a close, Liu jokingly expressed that she’s got “a bad case of senioritis.” Even as she waits to “graduate to retirement,” she acknowledged the sadness that comes with leaving such a fruitful career behind. “There are things I will miss about this work,” she said. “Bright and kind students, colleagues who make me laugh and give me support, daily intellectual engagement.”

Liu also celebrated the impact she’s been able to have in her many roles on campus. She said, “I believe I’ve been a positive influence in (each position), at least as much as any one fallible person can be.”

Once her retirement begins, Liu is excited to travel, noting a trip she and her husband will be taking as a retirement present to themselves. “My husband and I love going on multi-day bicycle tours in Europe and hope to do a few more of those,” said Liu. “And I want to sing karaoke in Africa and Australia or New Zealand. I’ve already sung in North America, South America, Asia, and Europe, so I want to sing on as many of the continents as possible.” In good humor, she acknowledged that singing in Antarctica is unlikely, however.

She’s also looking forward to an increase in free time that she intends to spend volunteering at Hartford Stage, the Red Cross, and “some other organizations whose mission (she believes) in.”

“I’m looking forward to having more time to read things that aren’t related to my teaching or research,” she said. “I recently remembered a series of fantasy novels that I was obsessed with in high school, so I bought used copies of the first three books on EBay, and I’m going to reread them. I’m curious to see whether they’ll stand the test of time: whether sixty-three-year-old me enjoys them as much as fifteen to seventeen-year-old me did.”

Wherever the future takes her, those at Eastern wish her all the best in the years to come.

HERE: A Poetry Journal Reading

Jessica Vieira

On February 1st, the first day of Black History Month, 2024, the English Department hosted a reading of the sixth edition of HERE, an international student designed poetry journal, published annually and edited by Eastern's own Dr. Daniel Donaghy, and students. It is dedicated to uplifting Eastern's up and coming creatives and their voices. Its goal is to present stories that bear witness to the differences and nuances that come with being human. The journal acknowledges people's experiences with open arms and welcomes every person that has something to say. HERE also aims to be a companion to its readers to relate to and be comforted by as they go about their own unique journey. The journal will always be inclusive, and it serves as a vessel to amplify voices that need to be heard.

The February reading took place in the Dr. David G. Carter Science Building auditorium, room 104. The room held more than 50 students, faculty, contributing poets, and families. Dr. Donaghy kicked it off, introducing the journal and its writers. He explained that from start to finish, HERE's goal is to bring people together as a family of creatives. New contributing poets are welcome always, and the list of writers continues to grow exponentially.

Twenty poets, including three high school students read pieces they had contributed. Poets came from all over the world, from Connecticut and the Midwest to Wales in the United Kingdom, and El Salvador. The first person to read was Elizabeth Johnson, winner of the Connecticut Poetry Festival. It ended with Fredrick Douglass III. Lilia Burdo, an Eastern Alumni currently working at Eastern read her poem included in the journal. Her work includes mandarin phrases, and she says that this is because "language does help us learn about ourselves and poetry also helps in that, and having both would be an exceptional help for us to connect with others." She believes that poetry isn't used to shape our experiences or identities, but it does help us express them.

Those that would like to read the journal for themselves can find it on Eastern's website under "HERE: A Poetry Journal." They are also available on facebook, @here.apoetryjournal, X (formerly known as Twitter), @here_poetry, and Instagram @herepoetry.

Sigma Tau Delta

Margaret Rousseau

Students in the English Department may be unfamiliar with Sigma Tau Delta. What is Sigma? What does Sigma do? How can students join, and what are the benefits of joining?

Sigma Tau Delta is the English Honors Society—students in the English major are selected if they meet certain academic criteria, such as number of English credits taken at Eastern and both overall grade point average and grade point average in English courses. If students meet the requirements, they will be invited to join, which they can accept as they like; membership is voluntary!

Sigma is a relatively low-level commitment for members, but it offers many opportunities which may advance English careers. Sigma is an international organization and over a hundred years old. Through Sigma, members have access to scholarships, internships, and opportunities to have their work published, all of which can benefit a student's career beyond Eastern.

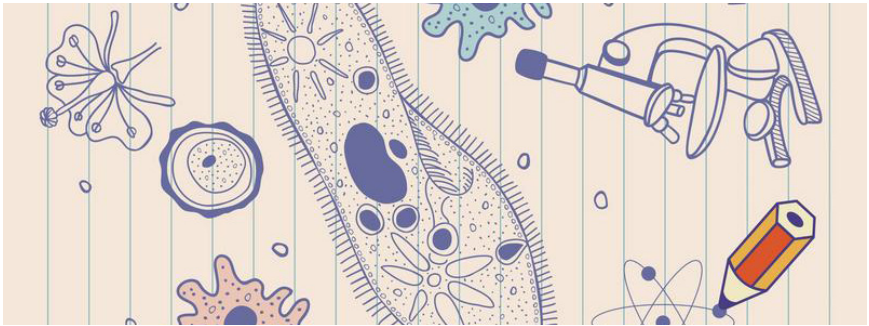
Around campus here at Eastern, Sigma does several things. First, it oversees book sale/swaps. Students can buy books for one dollar, or they can swap books they have for ones they want—academic books, children's books, fiction, poetry, any and all books are welcome! Sigma also organizes an ice cream social at the start of the Fall Semester to foster discussion and camaraderie amongst English majors and faculty members. Additionally, Sigma partners with Book Club and Creative Writing Club on the Big Read and events surrounding that. For instance, the three groups collaborated on a mythology-themed semi-formal party themed around the 2024 Big Read, Madeline Miller's *Circe*.

Another major event for Sigma is English Night. English Night is a night for celebrating English majors and their accomplishments, when Sigma members are inducted, and when English majors can present their senior capstone research projects. English Night is open to all English majors, as well as their families!

Anyone with questions about Sigma Tau Delta and what it does should direct their inquiries towards Dr. Allison Speicher in the English Department.

Sierra Madden, Double Major

Jessica Vieira



FastWeb.com / 2024

Sierra Madden, Senior at Eastern Connecticut State University, is a double major. Her course studies include a Biology major, an English major, and a minor in Psychology. She started her studies at Eastern enrolled as a Psychology major. She switched to English because she says she realized that she didn't like Psychology. She chose English because the words she was reading she found were helpful in her navigation through difficult points in her life. When she decided to take an Introduction to Literature course, she says that she found out she was pretty good at it, "I had room in my schedule and said I'm gonna be an English major." Now, Sierra uses her scientific background in fiction writing. These two majors also helped to break down the barrier between biology and people that don't have a background in STEM. She says that a basis in writing and concise articulation is important so that people know what you are talking about.

While she has always been passionate about scientific writing, Sierra states that English has taught her many ways to write things. She also says that it's nice to make biology, which is usually boring and has rigid guidelines, into something enjoyable and appealing to read, which is why her goal is to become a Scientific Journalist.

In high school, Sierra was passionate about biology because of a very influential biology

teacher. She says, "he was such a passionate teacher and just loved science so much." It was one of the only subjects that really clicked for her outside of literature. So it was fulfilling when the science did make sense because it was hard to grasp and was satisfying to learn about. She also says that she hated the constriction scientific writing has.

She read scientific journals in high school through the library's subscriptions, but when she graduated, she didn't have access to them anymore, and didn't read as much. She says that in science and scientific research, it's easy to be misinformed, "because people will write things and not do research." She states that either you find easy-to-read journals or go directly to the study or primary journal, which is super fatiguing, boring, and stressful. Her idea is to do the hard primary source reading for people and write it in a form that everyone can enjoy and learn from.

Before her plan to become a scientific journalist, her goal was to become a psychiatrist, mainly because she thought it would provide financial stability. "I was convinced I'd be in school for forever." Now, after graduation Sierra is participating in the Disney Internship program for a year, and then starting her MFA in Journalism at Boston University. Her dream goal is to work for National Geographic.

KeepENG Up With The CCE

Jessica Vieira

Olivia Gardener, a junior English Major at Eastern, started working with the Center for Community Engagement, or CCE, in her freshman year. She was the first freshman that the organization had ever hired. She began working because her education class required volunteer hours, and she ended up volunteering for more hours than she needed to. One day, the head of the program sat in on the program she was running and recommended that she apply for a job. Olivia was hired, and she's been working there ever since.

One thing that she noticed while working is that people outside of the program don't really know what the CCE is. Outside of the regular volunteers, information about the organization is not well known. To combat this and raise awareness of the organization and how volunteering can benefit students, Olivia started a newsletter. This newsletter covers the happenings of the organization, and what programs will be available to volunteer for, along with coverage of past programs. It is sent out to the student body every Monday morning via email. There are countless events that students can volunteer for, ranging from gardening to after school homework help at local elementary and middle schools. Events are focused into two categories, Special Events, and Community Programs.

When you sign up for a special event, you are committing to one day of volunteer work. The events in this category include raking leaves, gardening, and beautifying the community. These events are usually two-four hours long. Also in this category there are holiday-based events. An example of this is a Halloween party thrown at the Elks club every year. There is also an "I Love Me" Valentine's Day event at the middle school that promotes self-care during Valentine's Day. In the newsletter there is a section dedicated to special events.

The Community Programs occur once a week for the semester. Once students sign up, they are committed to go every week. The hours range from one to four hours. There are three categories for community events: After-School programs, Adult Population programs, and Elderly Population programs. The After-School programs consist of homework help, crafts with the kids, and mentor programs. Olivia runs a



CCE Members/ Olivia Gardener / 2024

girl's mentor group that focuses on "reflective things." For example, one event she did recently was bracelet making where the different colored beads represent different ways students spend their time. "Say orange represents sleep," she explained, "a student can look at that and say, 'I wish I had more orange beads,' or sleep. That way there's something more to the event than just a craft." The Adult Population programs include volunteering at an addiction recovery center to sit in at meetings and offer support. They also work in the Hospitality Center for People Experiencing Homelessness to help with bed logs, check-ins, and providing general company to guests. Volunteers can also help at the soup kitchen with preparing meals. The Elderly Population programs include writing pen pal letters, and celebrating birthdays, along with activities like bingo.

Olivia says that while the CCE began as a passion project, she's been able to find overlap with the English and Education courses that she's taking. The Newsletter is a direct overlap, but there's also the reading group she leads for second graders in Mansfield. She also is a pen pal to a second grader at a Willimantic elementary school. Since the Mansfield elementary school is better funded than the one in Willimantic, she says that the difference in reading level between the two second graders is palpable. She comments, "It's definitely been interesting." She's taking classes like Grammar and History and Development of the English Language, and she can see the developing stages in these kids, along with how far behind some students are because of a lack of funding. Olivia is a double major in English and Spanish, and she wants to teach English in Spanish speaking countries once she gets her Masters in secondary Ed. With the work that she has done with the CCE, she gets fulfilling, hands on learning experience to prepare her for her future.

Book Club and Company's Greek Mythology Dinner

Sierra Madden

On April 9th, in the BTR located in the student center, Book Club hosted their 3rd annual book themed dinner. This year's theme was inspired by the NEA Big read, *Circe*, and was transformed into an elegant Greek mythology venue. This year Book Club was supported by Sigma Tau Delta and Creative Writing Club in planning and funding the event. Fashion Forward, a club at Eastern that makes clothes and informs students on the wide world of fashion and its design also made a guest appearance. They performed a small runway show to the song "Won't Say I'm in Love" from the Disney movie *Hercules*, dressing the part in hand made Greek mythology inspired costumes.

Apart from the sandwich bar and fashion show, Book club hosted multiple rounds of Greek Mythology trivia where guests could win various prizes provided by Sigma Tau Delta. Sophomore Sydney Dameron said that "the sandwiches were really good and the trivia fun." Many guests chose to dress up for the evening to match the theming like Senior Sarah Haluch who admired the decor for the event, saying "So much detail was put into the decorations, bringing the whole theme to life." A detail especially loved by Fashion Forward was the photobooth area where guests could get photos taken and directly sent to their phones.

The Greek Mythology theme was carefully picked out based on the Big Read, *Circe*. However, given the popularity of Greek Mythology in the recent years due to books like *Song of Achilles* and *Circe* by Madeline Miller, the new adaptation series of Percy Jackson on Disney+, and even new theming for video games like Fortnite made it clear what the theme had to be. This event was carefully planned over five months, a semester in advance, to create the magical night. In years past, Book Club has hosted dinners with different themes such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Great Gatsby*.

As the president of Book Club, it has been an honor working with my club and eBoard on these dinners and creating such a fun environment for members outside of Book Club. I hope it is a tradition that continues through the years.

Emergent Scholars Recipient Lilia Burdo

Jessica Vieira

Last year, now eastern Alumni Lilia Burdo, was a recipient of the Emergent Scholar Award in Spring of 2023. Last year was the second year that it was available. This grant, established and funded by former Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Carmen Cid, supports under-represented students in the English major whose independent work requires monetary funding. To apply, Lilia submitted a description of her project, why she wanted the financial help, and a budget sheet to explain how she would spend the grant money. It also required a letter of recommendation, explaining what the student and their mentor will be working on.

Lilia took the Capstone Seminar Social Justice in Literature taught by Dr. Donaghy. There she worked on turning poems she wrote in previous semesters in Donaghy's classes into a poetry collection book. The poems she wrote were about her identity as a Chinese adoptee. Growing up, she didn't feel represented by popular content. Her goal with this Poetry book is to fill that literary gap.

When she received the grant, she said that she was excited to contribute to filling in the pieces that she was missing in representation of her identity and provide representation to those with a similar identity and experience as her. "As soon as I heard that I received it I was obviously super grateful immediately. I knew automatically it opened a lot of doors for me." In Donaghy's capstone seminar, reading all the experiences of people with different backgrounds, it was powerful and impactful to Lilia - reading these works gave her hope that she could fill that gap for others. Lilia used the grant to self-publish her poetry book, paying for printing funds and the ISBN, among other publishing related expenses. She printed about 115 copies and has donated some to other transracial Chinese adoptees. She hopes to get in touch with more adoptees to share her book with. She is also planning on donating copies to adoption camps.

Currently working at Eastern as a University Assistant in the Office of Global Learning, Lilia's plan beginning next year is to get her Masters degree in Higher Ed Admin at UConn. Her advice to anyone looking to apply for this award would be to get as specific as possible for the project. Pinpoint what you want to do, specifically, and what you plan to do with the grant money. The more specific your application is, the better the committee reviewing your application will be able to see what your vision is for the project.

If you are interested in a copy of Lilia's poetry collection for \$8 including shipping cost, email Lilia at burdol@easternct.edu

Grad School Advice from ENG Professors

Gabriella Beams

As the 2023-2024 academic year draws to a close, students are preparing for their summer in a variety of ways. Some are preparing for commencement activities while others are preparing ways on how to spend the next three months before their return to campus. Others are already planning to begin for what comes next after completing their undergraduate degree. Having to face the process of applying for schools all over again can be stress-inducing. Fortunately, Dr. DeRosa, Dr. McDonnell, Dr. Speicher, and Dr. Youngblood have advice.

Where did you go? For how long and what was your concentration?

Dr. DeRosa - MA in Contemporary American Lit and PHD in Rhetoric and Composition, both at the University of Rhode Island

Dr. McDonnell - PHD in English & Women's Studies at the University of Michigan

Dr. Speicher - MA and PHD in 19th Century American Lit at Indiana University (Bloomington)

Dr. Youngblood - MA in Southern Lit and a PHD in Video Game Studies, both from the University of Florida

What was your experience in grad school like?

Dr. Speicher - "Grad school was a rollercoaster. There are so many layers to it because you love one area as an undergrad but realize in graduate school it's a different environment because everyone's invested in the same thing but that leads to more competition. There's a lot more of having to prove yourself and there was a lot of skepticism about what I was working on, and I was like 'Hold the phone, wait awhile you'll see.'"

Is there anything specific students should be thinking about/avoid in the process of looking at schools?

Dr. Youngblood - "Search for a school that does what you want to do. You want faculty that you can connect with, and this in turn will open the door to funding because you are a natural fit in that environment. Apply within your interest range. If you search for it in a database, the results are going to be your future competitors. If the topic is super saturated, the ideas that you

are going to have are not going to be original."

Are there any areas of study you would recommend?

Dr. DeRosa - "So, I'm biased, of course, toward Rhetoric and/or Writing Studies. I'm not sure what kinds of opportunities are out there exactly now, because I haven't been on the job market in 25 years. But when I was, and from lurking, I believe universities will continue to seek out PhDs with the ability to teach writing and rhetoric. There are also some opportunities to work in positions as Writing Program Administrators at universities. The trends in the job market are up and down depending on enrollment, among other things."

What do you believe is the key to surviving grad school?

Dr. DeRosa - "As best you can, find and stay focused on what you enjoy doing. Being a part of a grad program is a huge investment for most people—time, money, emotional energy, etc. Some programs may be ultra-competitive, so if you don't thrive in those environments, choose another program. ... try to get the vibe of the program and the grad students themselves. This way, you know if the "fit" is good for you. Always have a plan B or plan C."

Dr. McDonnell - "Being curious about things and asking questions is really great. Be reflective. There are a lot of ways to be happy and I worry for people who assume that professional success or academic excellence is the defining feature of if they're a good person or deserving of consideration. Having a few different ways to believe that your life is meaningful and that you're making a contribution is really great and having some regard for your own wellbeing is really wise."

Dr. Speicher - "Having the internal voice to tell you you're doing it okay. Grad school won't be as a supportive environment as it is in undergrad but having that kernel that says you're doing it okay is what it takes to get through."

Dr. Youngblood - "Grad school can be difficult and you have to ask yourself how much of your life are you willing to sacrifice. You should think about why it's worth it to go to grad school and give yourself an opportunity to recover between your semesters. If, after your first semester, you're still around, you survived! The little victories matter."

Joe Hines, English Minor

Jessica Vieira

Joe Hines is a Business Information Systems or BIS major and is working on minors in Business Analytics, Computer Science, and English. He chose the BIS major because he enjoys working with data. At the end of his career, he hopes to teach BIS and business. His goal is that BIS becomes one of the pillars of education like English, history, math, and science. In High School, Joe was very involved in English classes. Much of what he did in High School revolved around English. His first venture into English after High School was an independent study with Professor Youngblood focused on videogame Level design. The level that he made with this independent study used environmental storytelling to show what happened in the level before the player got there. From there, he just decided to add the minor to his course load because he enjoyed the experience so much.

Joe struggled between making English a second major or having it be another minor, but after some thought he decided on the minor because the work from BIS and his other minors would make it hard to complete his degree on time. Joe says that the skills he has learned from the English minor include developing his critical thinking skills and has been able to translate that to writing. Most of the work that he does with English has been argumentative or trying to sell something, even in classes that deal with fiction. He says, "I feel like you're trying to sell ideas even if you're just writing narratives, it's about engaging the reader." Public speaking is a big part of what Joe does, and all of his English classes have helped him to articulate ideas in a public setting.

Joe does a lot of public speaking, so the minor, because it focused on reading and articulating arguments, helped during internships and interviews for jobs. Joe was offered two internships for this summer 2024, one including The Hartford, which he accepted. Lots of BIS classes deal not only with data itself, but being able to tell a story with it, and the English background helps to translate data into something that people in the business can understand and use. That skill is vital to the job that he wants to pursue. With that, the English minor is a good option for people that enjoy studying English, but don't have time to dedicate to the major. The skills one can learn through taking English classes at Eastern are useful to anyone pursuing anything.

Big Read Author Talk: Madelyn Miller

Gabriella Beams

In the culminating event for this year's Big Read, students, staff, community members, and other Connecticut state universities had the opportunity to virtually meet with *Circe* author Madeline Miller.

During the community discussion, Miller spoke of how the seeds for *Circe's* creation were sewn. She enjoyed Greek mythology at a young age and was entranced by Circe's character, and yet the novel's creation started from a place of anger. Miller was frustrated with women's representation in Greek myth as "flat, 2D, and stereotypically sexist". Women were never really explored as fleshed-out characters, unlike male figures such as Odysseus or Achilles. When they were, using the examples of Clytemnestra and Medea, they were villainized. Miller states about Circe, "Every time I approached the Odyssey, I was disappointed with later interpretations...poisoner, witch, she was used as a scare figure for when women aren't under control". And yet, *Circe* is "really a story about what it means to be a hero, what is heroic, and that a woman's life itself is inherently interesting on its own". Women's lives need and deserve to be given this epic treatment.

Despite the technical hiccups that occurred, many were able to express their gratitude for *Circe* as well as Miller's debut novel "The Song of Achilles" which retells the Trojan War from Patroclus' perspective. They also expressed their gratitude for the advice that she was able to give on her writing process. One piece of advice given that was well-received by the audience was that the story has to make sense psychologically. "If it's not interesting to you, it won't make sense to the reader. Use what makes sense for the story and make it something you love".

Miller's assertion that Circe's "ability to connect with the world comes from her desire to love and to be loved" rings true to the response that this year's Big Read has had. With lectures by scholars such as Carrie Baker and Vincent Tomasso, a Greek mythology-themed dinner, an exhibit inspired by *Circe* in Eastern's Art Gallery, and various book discussions across campus, *Circe* has certainly connected not only with those familiar with the source material but also those just being introduced to Greek mythology for the first time.

English Night 2024

Gabriella Beams

On Wednesday, May 1st, the English department held its annual English Night event, an opportunity for English majors and their families to gather and recognize student accomplishments and hear presentations on students' Capstone research as well as Senior Seminar Presentations.

The event began with opening remarks by department chair Dr. Steve Ferruci who then presented six awards for student work.

Marcus Grant was the recipient of this year's Award for Service to the Department as a student who has helped with departmental projects, coordinated events, or organized student clubs that have connections with English studies as well as the Award for Academic Excellence, for a student who has demonstrated superior ability in and dedication to English studies. **Anna Miller** was presented the Award for Lifelong Learning, for a returning or continuing student who has shown a steady love of literature, writing, and the pursuit of knowledge. **Samantha Vertucci** received the Award for Contributions to the Cultural Life of the Campus, for a student who has been actively involved as a writer or editor in literary publications, theater, or other literary and artistic events on campus. **Eva Glaser** not only received the Award for Excellence in Teaching or Tutoring, presented to a student who has excelled in Teaching Internships, the Writing Associates program, or other teaching experiences, but also the Award for an Outstanding Future Educator, presented to a student who has achieved academic excellence while completing a double major in English and Early Childhood, Elementary, or Secondary Education.

The event then transitioned to students in ENG 499 Directed Research presenting their scholarly or creative projects as an alternative to the Capstone seminar. **Charlie Gauthier** presented his work on Psalm 106 within the larger story of the Bible, focusing on a Christ-centered interpretation. **Graham Klyberg** presented his work on Rick Riordan's publications, demonstrating how Riordan has drawn from numerous sources of ancient myth across all cultures and shows what mythology can look like with a modern spin while still serving its original purpose. **Paige Stegina** opted for a creative project, writing three



Paige Stegina and Project / Gabriella Beams / 2024

chapters of a young adult fantasy novel entitled "Arena". Stegina studied popular authors such as JRR Tolkien, Leigh Bardugo, and JK Rowling to determine what facets of fantasy storytelling spoke to her and how she could use this to create her novel.

Students in Dr. Maureen McDonnell's ENG 462 Senior Seminar presented research exploring stories of disability and their legacies. Presentations began with **Emma Bussolotta** who presented her Capstone project "Crippled Bastards: Trauma Response and Disability in Fantasy Literature." Her presentation discussed how fantasy literature can offer a dynamic perspective on the media representation of disabled persons. Her presentation raised the questions of what it means to be a disabled person in an ableist society, and who is the real villain.

Next to present was **Meghan Hurley** with her project "Who is to blame for the lack of equity in classrooms?: An Exploration of Ableism in the Education System". Hurley addressed the numerous disparities in the Special Education system and how future educators can be inspired to take action to dismantle the pipeline existing between special education and prison as well as how to advocate for their students in these programs.

Last to present was **Sam Pine** with her project "Share If You (Dis)Agree: Inspiration Porn's Place in Social Media and its Impact on Disabled Bodyminds." Inspiration porn described the portrayal of those with disabilities as being sources of inspiration for able-bodied individuals. Every day, social media is plastered with inspiration porn and is shared by millions who are unaware of the negative impact that these posts have. Pine hopes to raise awareness of the detrimental impact that inspiration porn has on the population as a whole and raise awareness of the broader issue of ableism.

The Frog Pond

A Short Story

Ian Harrington

I hate the taste of whiskey. The burn and bite turn my stomach sour. But it's my Uncle Jack's favorite, and I knew that from early on. I remember one party at home, back when Dad was still around, and he had this glass of what looked like apple juice on the table. I took a sip, being the "thieving bastard" that he had called me afterwards, and spit it back out onto the table as it threatened to scorch the earth down into my stomach. While my parents rushed to me, gave me water, tried to wash it out, Jack burst into laughter. Not even a smack from my mother could snap him from it.

One night, when I was maybe eighteen or nineteen, I can't quite recall, he took me out to this club down in the city called the Frog Pond, and I tried it again. I wasn't supposed to be let in, but he managed to sneak me past the bouncer with a hastily made fake that he bought from "a guy" somewhere in the city. He also slipped him a couple 50s to keep him quiet, which the bouncer took and slipped into his pocket without another word. Jack flashed me his joker grin and led me inside.

As we sat down at the bar, he motioned for the bartender. "Hey, bub, can I get, uh, two Jack Daniels on ice please?" His voice had carried a whiskey-and-cigar-ravaged sound for as long as I'd known him, and could scarcely be heard above the noise of the band playing. As a trumpet wailed across the sea of people, the bartender poured us both a glass and passed them over.

Jack picked up his glass, nodded to me, and said "cheers" before gently sipping. I followed suit, and sipped the drink back. Like that childhood memory that rested at the edge of my mind, I almost gagged as it went down. Yet, I took another sip. He would be paying for the drink and had gone through the effort of getting me in the building, let alone to the bar. What kind of trade-off would it be if I spat the drink on him again.

Jack and I haven't talked much since the incident, and when he came over to my mom's house and offered to take care of me while she went away to see her mother, it struck me as odd.. She asked me to come with her and I said no. I think she's realized by now that I can't stand her mother. I don't think she can either, but she keeps going

to take care of her. Says it's her "family duty" or something. Regardless, once she had left and it was just me and Jack, after sitting through one of his favorite old black-and-white movies that left me devoid of color, he offered to take me to this bar.

The band stopped playing as we sat there, then started again, and though the song seemed the same to me, I watched as Jack's face turned paler than the ice in his glass. He reached over the bar and tugged on the bartender's sleeve. "The hell they playin' this song for?" The bartender shrugged and kept polishing the glass.

I nudged him. "Jack, what's the song? Did they change or isn't it the same one?"

He sighed. "You know nothing of jazz, do you, kid?" He sipped from his glass again. "The first one was Autumn Leaves in C Major and the second one is My One And Only Love in the same damn key. Come on, your dad would be embarrassed."

That was the first time he had mentioned Dad all day. I felt my heart clench as I did the same to the drink in my hand. "Is that why you brought me here, Jack? To tell me that my Dad would think I'm a dumbass or something because I can't tell the difference between some autumn song and some love song?"

"Jesus, no!" He sipped the last of the drink and slammed the glass down. "I just wanted to get to know my nephew a little more."

"Then why here?"

"Because it's where your dad played his last song, kid." He sighed, hands clasped together and his face leaning into them. He turned slowly, pointing a crooked finger at the stage as the saxophone player was illuminated by a beam of pale blue light. "Right there, where that sax player stands, your father played this same exact song on the same exact instrument. Well, not the same but you get what I mean, kid."

I pushed the drink towards the other side of the counter. "But, dad died of a heart attack, didn't he?" I scooped the drink

The Frog Pond

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back and took a sip, ignoring the burn.

“Yes, and it happened right there.” As the saxophone crooned and the lights dimmed, Jack slowly sunk into himself. “And I was there, kid. Be glad you weren’t, be glad you were too young.”

I sipped back the rest of the drink, my throat almost numb from the burn. “Is that why you brought me here? To regale about Dad and his music?”

“Again, no.” He turned back to me. “I wanted to tell you because, first off, I don’t think anyone ever told you, given your reaction. And second, I wanted you to understand something that your dad had always understood. When it started, he didn’t stop for a moment until the song was done. He kept playing until he physically couldn’t. He died doing what he loved. We should all be so goddamn lucky.”

“How in hell is that lucky, man? How is it lucky to drop dead in front of so many people?”

He shook his head at me. “It’s lucky that he enjoyed his life as it was handed to him.” He began sipping the melted water that had collected beneath the ice in his glass. “Your dad was dealt a bad set of cards and did nothing wrong in his life. He learned to be a good man and enjoy his life. And you need to know that he didn’t just drop dead, the man gave a final swansong greater than some musicians ever get.”

He took an ice cube out of the glass and began chewing it. “My point is this, kid. The road of life is built without an end, and you never know which turn will be your last. So it’s better to take some time and walk on the grass, even a perfectly good sidewalk is right there.”

As the saxophone died down and the singer took its place, spilling his guts into the audience with a song about tender love, I nodded silently. I then picked up my glass and gave a toast to my uncle. “To Dad.”

He met it with his own. “To your Dad.” And we sipped together the melted water gathered in our glasses as the song swelled and filled our ears.

ENG 207: Writing For Videogames

Jessica Vieira

Writing For Videogames, taught by Dr. Jordan Youngblood, is a videogame studies class that marries English rhetoric and writing to the not-so-traditional gameplay medium. The class’s primary sources include popular videogames including *Undertale* and *Hades*. At the end of the semester, each student rated each videogame they played.

The ratings, averaged, are as follows:

Inside: 6.5/10

Undertale: 8.5/10

Return of the Obra Dinn: 8.5/10

Before Your Eyes: 8/10

If Found: 6.5/10

Citizen Sleeper: 7.5/10

Oxenfree: 7/10

Hades: 8/10

Soma: 7/10

Florence: 5/10

The most mentioned games at the end of class were *If Found*, *Citizen Sleeper*, and *Soma*. The most popular videogames included ones that surprised students, and moved them. The most common comment from each student was that they weren’t sure if they would like the games, but they were pleasantly surprised. Overall the class pushed its students out of their comfort zones to both play and write innovative and exciting games.

The Limping Man

A Short Story

Malek Allari

When the sky is clear, and even the angels can be seen with the naked eye, a man stands in the middle of bullets, screams, and blood. The man, with his big figure, stands with a handgun. His hand shakes uncontrollably, with twitching eyes. The man limps through the battlefield, raises his hand, and aims at a figure on the ground. The figure crawls away from the man standing on top of the figure. The man stomps on the figure's legs, and the crows scream. The mice squeak in fear. Black smoke rose behind the man, and the figure was shaking, trying to shield himself. The handgun is still pointing at the figure, and the finger that is wrapped around it tightens. A shot sounds, and the shaking figure stands still. Blood runs from the body like a river. The limping man continues walking, shooting down anything that is moving. After three shots, a metal clank can be heard. The limping man reloads his handgun and starts walking again towards the other soldiers who are fighting with machine guns and tanks.

A chopper flies by, and everyone looks at the waving flag. A red and blue flag, it is the end of the war. Everyone stops, raises their heads, and throws their helmets and weapons on the ground. When all weapons are on the ground, the soldiers on either side walk to each other, shake hands, embrace, and say goodbyes in their respective languages. The limping man sees all the hate on all the faces, the gratitude for the war's end, and the emptiness of returning home. The hate of the soldiers is far greater than emptiness or gratitude, but the limping man knows that nothing can be done.

"In the past, it was either kill or be killed. Now, it is killed when I tell you to; what has this world come to?" a black soldier asks. In the car that is transporting all the soldiers back to the plane that will take them home, the limping man sits with his handgun tight around his fingers. He looks at the black soldier but says nothing. By the age of twenty-two, a young man is munching on a piece of bread. "This world has come to an end. If you decide that someone needs to be killed and you send someone to do it, this world has ended," an old soldier says. The limping man looks at the old soldier and says, "Come to an end? This world, this vile, wretched world, is not coming to an end. This world is..."

"Going nowhere," the black soldier says.

"It is building itself," the limping man continues.

"Believe what you want, but if you see black smoke, blood, crows and mice, and unaccounted, lifeless bodies, it is an image of destruction."

The limping man bites his lips. The only thing that can be heard now is the roaring engine and the gravel. The car shakes a little, and the old soldier knocks on the small window connecting the cargo space with the driver and signals for him to slow down. As the car slows, the young soldier looks around and raises his finger to the black soldier, "Why would you say the world is coming to an end when there is a lot of time left for you to live your life normally?"

The black soldier looks at the young soldier, puts his hand on his gun, and says, "Listen, boy. There is nothing normal to go back to. Every night, for the rest of your life, you will hear the screams, the bullets, the tanks, and the gushing of blood. You will wake every night, in the middle of it, screaming for help to notice it was all a nightmare."

"But you will have someone by your side," the limping man says, "to help you go through that pain with you and eventually heal you from it."

"The only thing the people will look at you is that you are a cold-blooded killer. They will not blame their leaders or themselves. They will blame the ones with the guns in their hands. The ones with blood on their skin. The ones who slept through battle. The ones," the black soldier choked on his thought. Everyone falls silent again. The limping man bites his lips again. He holds his handgun tighter to his chest. "There is hope," he says. The old soldier nods his head. The black soldier shakes his head. The young soldier opens his mouth and closes it again.

The car stops, and the soldiers climb the ramp to board the plane. The limping man sits down, ties the seatbelt around his chest, and waits. Soon after, when all the soldiers are ready, the ramp closes, the plane starts speeding, and takes off. When the seatbelt lights turn off, the

The Limping Man

Malek Allari

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limping man lets loose the seatbelt and goes to the bathroom. Everyone is looking at the limping man as he limps to the bathroom, and when the door closes, the black soldier shakes his head, and the young soldier opens a bag of jerky and starts eating it. The old soldier stands by the bathroom door and waits for the limping man. Everyone hears the flush, and the door unlocks before the limping man opens the door and leaves.

The limping man returns when the old soldier finishes from the bathroom. "Did you feel that?" the young soldier asks.

"What?" the black soldier asks.

"The sudden jerk of the plane."

"No."

The old soldier sits back in his seat. The limping man sits down with shaking hands and wavering eyes. He looks around panickily before tightening his grip around the trigger. Silent tears run down his face. He holds his hands to his ears and moves back and forth slowly like he is thinking something. The black soldier goes back to the magazine he is holding in his hand. The old soldier rests his head and closes his eyes. The young soldier stands up and goes to the bathroom. When the young soldier is in the bathroom, the black soldier closes the magazine and turns to face the limping man. The limping man steadily puts his hands on his thighs and relaxes his shoulders. He looks at the black soldier and asks, "What?"

"Nothing, you look miserable," the black soldier responds. The limping man looks at the black soldier as sweat runs down his face and neck. "Something happened?" the black soldier asks.

The limping man shakes his head. The finger around the trigger tightens. The limping man stands, aims the gun at the black soldier, and pulls the trigger. Everyone stands up from the panic of the bullet and freezes up as they see the limping man standing above the dead body of the black soldier. The bathroom door opens fast, scaring the limping man to aim at the bathroom door and shoot the young soldier in the chest. The

young soldier falls back and hits his head on the toilet seat. The old soldier stands up and walks to the limping man, but the limping man aims the gun at the old soldier and shouts, "Stop there!"

The old soldier stops. He signals for the rest of the company to stop moving. The limping man walks to the bathroom and looks at the young soldier, "No! No!" he screams, "Not the young man! Not him!" the young soldier moves his hand and reaches out to the limping man, "I want to see my mom."

The limping man drops back. The young soldier turns his head, "Mom, Dad, anyone home? Ma, where are you, Ma? I can't see you, Ma," the young soldier cries. The limping man holds himself in a child's pose position, tears running down his face. The old soldier puts his hand on the limping man's shoulder, but the limping man swings out of the way. The limping man fires the gun, and the bullets hit the ceiling of the cabin. "Why are you doing this, son?" the old soldier asks.

"You have no idea!" the limping man screams, "I am doing this...for the world."

"The world?"

"My mission. I need to kill the evil soldiers. The ones that kill."

"The war is over, son. The soldiers are no more."

"They are here," the limping man whispers and looks around, "I have to kill them before they kill me." The limping man starts firing in all directions. As soon as the gun stops, he reloads fast and starts shooting again. "I need to kill them." The limping man said and shot the old soldier. When the old soldier's body hits the floor, the limping man shoots the remaining soldiers. He tries to reload his gun, but he is out of bullets. He stops for a second and takes a breath. He looks around and says, "They are dead. The harbingers of death are dead."

"They sure are," I say. I reach out for my handgun that rests on my waist, stand up, and aim my gun at the limping soldier. He tries to shoot me, but his gun is out of bullets. He starts limping fast towards me, but I shoot at his feet. The limping man

The Limping Man

Malek Allari

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stops. "Are you one of them? The evil soldiers."

I shake my head. I aim at the limping man's head. I see his tears running down his face. He reaches out to his pocket and takes out a picture. He kisses the picture, puts it in his chest pocket, and looks at me with both arms stretching to his side, dropping the gun in the process. "Can you embrace me, please?" he asks. I sigh and walk towards him. As I embrace him, I say, "You did good, soldier," and shoot him in the back. As the body slumps to the floor, I prepare for the pilot's room.

I walk in to see the two pilots dead, shot in the head with a pillow on the floor. I removed one of them from the seat, the plane to the runway. When I land off the plane on a runway in the middle of a forest, I take off my uniform and wear a suit. I exit the plane, look around, and put a cigarette in my mouth. I see car headlights coming towards me. The car stops in front of me, I see a man come out. He walks towards me, flicks a lighter, and lights my cigarette. I take the first puff and hear, "How was it?"

"A failure," I respond.

"The soldier or the war?"

I take another puff, look at the man, and say, "All of it. The war, the cycle of destruction and rebirth, it is all a failure."

"It is all for a great cause."

"If you call war a great cause, you are the same as the people who send out the soldiers to fight for them because they are too afraid to get slapped in the face."

"Watch what you say; it could be held against you."

"What? You are gonna shoot me too and let me die like a dog like the rest of them."

"You deserve a better death."

"Nobody deserves a better death. In the end, you never saw the bodies, the blood, or the bullets. You should see it sometime, it is an interesting sight."

"Why is that?"

I start walking towards the forest. "Because no one had a different colored blood. In the end, it was all the same. Crimson red. That's all it was."

I take out my gun, look at the man as he reaches for his gun, and smile at him. I aim the gun at the side of my head, "You gotta see it, and once you do, study it. Study it long and hard enough to know that war was never supposed to be taken out of the chess board."

I shoot myself, and in the split second, as I fall, I see the emptiness of returning home.

Contributing Writers



Emily Conte / 2024

Gabriella (Gabby) Beams, Editor, is a sophomore at Eastern, majoring in Elementary Education and English with a minor in History. On top of academics, she is a member of Eastern's Concert Chorale, Knit Wits, volunteers with the CCE in the America Reads program, and currently works as an AP Assistant in the Fiscal Affairs department.



Emily Conte / 2024

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Emily Conte / 2024

Marcus Grant is a graduating senior English major with concentrations in literary studies and creative writing, and a minor in writing. He's worked as the Managing Editor for The Campus Lantern, a Writing Tutor in the Writing Center, and now as a Public Relations Writer for Eastern's University Relations. After graduation, he will be attending Tufts University, pursuing his PhD in English Literature.



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Contributing Writers



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Malek Allari / 2024

Malek Allari is a double major in English Creative Writing and Philosophy. He was the Editor in Chief of Campus Lantern for two years and is currently President of the International Student Association. He has completed two novels. After Eastern, he is pursuing an MFA in Fiction at University of New Hampshire. In the future, he plans to become a professor and author.

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Congratulations ECSU Class of 2024!