

KEEP-ENG IN TOUCH

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A Message from the Chair	1
A Message from the Editors	2
What to Do With an English Major	3
Communication	4
What Does it Take to be a Writing Tutor?	5
Being a Tutor in the Writing Center	6
Nothing Minor When You're an English Major	7
Poetry: Safiya Palmer, "Dandelion"	7
Student Teaching at ECSU	8
Sigma Tau Delta	9
Introducing Eastern's Book Club	10
Creative Writing E-Board Visits the CT Literary Festival	11-12
Spotlight on Independent English Capstones	13-14
Poetry: Colleen Goff, "Sagging Pants Isn't the Issue"	15
An Interview with Professor Chirico	16
Student Essay: "Attitudes Towards Death"	17
Alumni Spotlight: Taylor Hammond ('13)	18
English Night	19
News Highlights	20

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



It would be overstating things to call the Fall 2021 semester the first “normal” semester since the COVID-19 pandemic began, but it was perhaps the most normal-*ish* one since March, 2020 (or is that *normalesque*?). Nobody was quite ready to pack up the webcams, but our classes were held in person (albeit fully masked—I’m not entirely sure what any of my students’ faces look like below the bridge of the nose). We even managed to have a few events where students and faculty could gather as a department.

There’s no denying that Fall 2021 was still seriously taxing. (“At least it’s not 2020” was what I believe is called “a whole mood.”) But it did feel like an improvement. Granted, this issue of Keep-Eng in Touch is coming out a bit later than expected because the *end* of the semester turned a little bit bonkers on me, but the *rest* of the Fall 2021 was an improvement.

What was totally business-as-usual was the great work that our students and faculty continued to produce, which you can read more about here. A highlight for me was our first in-person English Night in two years (see p. 19), but this issue also brings updates from student clubs (see pp. 10 and 11-12), classes (see pp. 16-17), and more (see, um, all the other pages). Many thanks to editors Melody Cabarroguis and Amanda Hill and to all the contributors for putting this issue together!

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS



It has been a great journey working for this newsletter. I am grateful and proud of everyone who helped out with this project. Big thanks to Professor Pauley and Amanda for answering any questions that I had. This work wouldn't be possible without the contribution of the student writers, faculty, and other members of ECSU; through this project, I got to know more about my colleagues.

Though challenging at times, I learned a lot in the process of writing, editing, and preparing the articles in newsletter and posts in the social media.

Overall, I hope you get a glimpse of the stories, the events, the people, and organizations that comprise not just the English Department but the whole Eastern campus community.



Working on this newsletter as an Intern for ECSU's English Department has been an incredible journey from start to finish. I love writing and editing and being able to do that gave me a nice break from classes throughout this semester to pursue something I feel passionately about.

Working alongside Melody and Professor Pauley has given me valuable insight into how to enhance my work, which I will definitely use throughout my future endeavors. It was an honor to be able to work with such great writers to produce the best newsletter possible to reflect all the accomplishments of the English Department as well as having a shared sense of pride for the department as a whole.

WHAT TO DO WITH ENGLISH FROM AN ENGLISH STUDENT

ASPEN BEN AZULAY

Like a typical English major, I was a child who loved to read. For me, reading was an escape from a world I didn't always understand into a place that was patient as it guided me through its experience. Reading helped me understand people. It taught me to be more aware of my surroundings and to seek new experiences. It developed inside me an awareness of all the beautiful differences that make every individual's life unique.

Reading and learning were exciting. Discussing new topics and educating myself about our universe and all those in it were fun. I found myself constantly delving into research, trying to learn all I could. As a child, though, I approached research as a set of discrete issues, learning about one subject and then moving on to another. Because I couldn't connect what I was learning to what I already knew, I often felt overwhelmed.

College has given me the skill to make connections and build on what I already know. It has allowed me to take courses that demonstrate how all aspects of our world are interconnected. As someone in the Cultural Studies concentration, specifically, I can attest to how important this coursework has been in my education. The collection of information and topics that had previously been jumbled in my brain has become more organized as this concentration has given me the tools to begin creating and seeing connections in places I previously never would have.

If I were to name one concept that the Cultural Studies concentration has shown me, it is a deep understanding of all types of intersectionality and how to apply such information to real-world issues. Everything in life is intricately intertwined, whether it be about the natural world, the social, the cultural, or the economic.

Learning to see these connections and understanding the relationship between people and our world are vital for integrating sustainable change. While it is impossible for anyone to fully grasp the

experiences of all people on this planet, learning the skills to properly listen, make connections, and attach what is being told to you to information you already know are amazing and crucial steps.

"Everything in life is intricately intertwined, whether it be about the natural world, the social, the cultural, or the economic."

As an English major, I cannot emphasize enough that English is much more than simply reading, writing, and teaching. It is a study so broad it is applicable, malleable, and vital for any job that is out there. The core of English is communication on a personal level. Whether through speech, visuals, or writing, every job in one way or another needs to create connections to function. As a result, every job needs people who are skilled in developing relationships and in communicating and developing personal messages.

As English majors, we learn how to present information in a multitude of ways and learn to adjust to different audiences. The more one learns how to communicate, relate to, and truly understand the experiences of other people, the more one can effectively relay a message, have real conversations with others, exchange information, and create change. This is a vital skill for any company or organization.

I plan to take the skills I have learned in this major towards being a librarian. I love learning about others. An environment where I get to help develop and implement social programs while surrounded by knowledge that I get to share that with others sounds like a dream.

However, I would like to be clear. While this is my path, with such a deep and broad major like English, any career that involves sharing knowledge, communication, and working with people is within reach.

COMMUNICATION: HOW ONE SKILL CAN TRANSLATE TO SUCCESS

CARLY PRENTISS

The ability to hold a conversation just barely scratches the surface of what it means to communicate. Often, people get caught up in an obsession with logical facts and mechanical skills that they need for their career, but fall short when it comes to telling other people what they know.

In any career path, from computer science to music, and everything in between, the ability to use words to one's advantage is vital not simply to succeed, but to also exceed expectations. I am a first-year Psychology major with a concentration in Behavior Analysis. I hope to go to law school and become an attorney, but I want to develop a strong background in human behavior patterns and the reasons for people's behavior.

Law school has a reputation for being extremely difficult, not just for the complexity of the material, but also for the sheer amount of work. Naturally, you can pass your classes by devoting hours and long nights to studying and memorizing the content. But, in the bigger picture, that can only get you so far. How useful would that knowledge be if there was no way to extend it to others? Learning it is truly only half of the battle.

Knowing what I wanted to pursue as a career, I made the decision to minor in English. It's important to note that English isn't confined to the study of literature, if that's not what sparks your interest. For example, I decided to focus on rhetoric, which pays attention to persuasive and effective speaking and writing. Courses like Introduction to Rhetorical Criticism, Literary Theory, Composition Theory, and Rhetoric and Cultural Studies help students excel at creating and sharing ideas, constructing arguments, evaluating social theories, and influencing others.

Applying these skills in a law school environment could truly be the difference between simply passing and graduating with distinction. It

could be the difference between being good and being great.

From my short experience at Eastern, having a more thorough background in communication has also allowed me to excel in subjects that I know I am not normally as strong in. Biology, for example, has an endless amount of information regarding the specificity of human life and the environment from microscopic to macroscopic levels, which often is lost on me much like it is for many others. Applying the information I was learning to real-life examples allowed me to fully grasp the concepts and understand why they work, which turned projects and exams (things that would cause me dread to even think about) into something I could be confident in.

The social transition from high school to college is stressful enough for students that it can be easy to forget the true reason they are there: carving out a path for their future. What is our job going to be? Where are we going to work? How much money will we be making, and is it worth it? One thing too many people forget is communication. Communication is the one element shared among all the numerous career paths in the world. We all must be able to evaluate situations, express problems, and find solutions.

Even when we take it on a nonprofessional level, English is constantly surrounding us in our daily lives. It is how we can share our worries with those we care about, how we ask questions, and how we inquire about subjects we are interested in recreationally. Those who take the time to learn how to master such skills can enrich their lives and understanding of others. Therefore, even a minor in English should be a serious consideration for any college student regardless of their major. It is only when we learn how to share our thought processes and ideas that we can sincerely blossom.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A WRITING TUTOR?

RICHARD GUMPERT

There's a magical moment that comes when a student's eyes suddenly light up with inspiration. You can see the spark turn to flames, as the student figures out what it is they want to do in their writing. I've seen that spark in the eyes of students of many disciplines, ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds. Since becoming a tutor, if I've learned anything, it's that—as clichéd as it might sound—anybody can be a good writer, and I'm proud to say that I play a role in bringing out that good writer in my tutees.

When I think of what it takes to be a good tutor, the first word that comes to mind is “patience.” I've worked with tons of students over the past couple years, and in that time, I have yet to work with any one student who writes the exact same way as another. We all have our own strengths and weaknesses, and identifying those nuanced differences is no easy feat. I don't expect to be able to just look at a student's paper and instantly know how to develop their writing skill.

Certainly there's no expectation for tutors to do so in the writing center in general: we do not offer proofreading services, which would otherwise be the cheapest and most direct way to provide quick feedback to students. Rather, I take my time to carefully analyze a student's writing, and then I move forward from there. There are so many factors that play into every writing assignment—from the professor's directions and instructions to the student's cultural background—and it's a tutor's job to be aware of these elements. It may not always be the fastest process, but it makes a huge difference in the lives of students.

I'm reminded of a foreign exchange student I have worked with previously. They came to the writing center one day seeking help with their English coursework. While, right off the bat, one might expect to run into some potential language

barriers that would impact elements of writing such as grammar or flow, the real issue turned out to be a cultural barrier. Their writing was grammatically and structurally impressive, but it failed to address the prompt of the paper. The reason? Literary studies looked entirely different back at their home university on the other side of the world—down to the very philosophies and literary theories employed in the first place.

Being able to take the time to recognize that, though, I was able to work productively with this student. And, not only did we work our way through that paper, but they would return in the future to work with me again. I'll always be proud of how I handled my time with that student. They came seeking help, and I was able to offer advice that pinpointed the issues they were dealing with—even if the issues were not immediately intuitive.

“There are so many factors that play into every writing assignment... and it's a tutor's job to be aware of these elements. It may not always be the fastest process, but it makes a huge difference in the lives of students.”

Going forward, I plan to keep working with students as long as I can. Though my time at Eastern will be coming to an end soon, my love for working with students has driven me onto my career path as well—I'll be graduating this year with my certification in English secondary education. Working with students really is a treat, and I'm excited to be able to keep impacting students' lives far into the future.

TAMING THE BEAST THAT IS COLLEGE WRITING: BEING A TUTOR IN THE WRITING CENTER

EM(MA) WALTON

When I was first asked about writing this piece, I was presented with a very interesting question: What does it take to be a writing tutor?

My initial reactions to this question were pretty obvious. I know how to type (arguably) intelligible sentences. I know what a comma splice is and how to avoid it. I know that not citing your sources is a big no-no at the college level.

I closed my inbox and put my car into drive, thinking my response to this question would be that simple. But, with the radio blasting on some back road in the middle of my hour-long drive home, my simple response began to unravel. What exactly *is* “knowing how to write”?

The whole reason I am a writing tutor is because one of my professors recommended me for the position. In simple terms, they must have seen a writer competent enough to tutor other students. But that led me to another dead end: What is being “competent” in writing?

Turning up the radio, I let the English major in me nerd-out over the mastery of the lyricist’s craftsmanship: This, I thought, is lyrical perfection of the alternative music genre. In all truth-

fulness, that’s how the whole idea for this piece came to me: sitting at a stoplight and having a moment of nerd-bliss over a lyricist’s writing genius.

I began to think about the concept of genre. Perhaps it’s obvious, but it’s easy to forget that academic writing is its own genre with its own conventions, norms, and expectations.

What it takes to be an effective student writer is not some ambiguous knowledge of writing or inborn aptitude for it, but rather an understanding of the academic writing genre.

My competency in writing at the college level comes down to understanding academic writing *as* a genre (and also explains why my writing skills don’t translate as well to writing, say, a short story or a killer alternative song).

When students come into the Writing Center, I know they know how to write—they wouldn’t have been admitted to Eastern, otherwise. Nevertheless, many students struggle with their assignments and papers. Even worse, they often believe that they can’t write well.

But if I learned anything from my stop-light moment, it’s that what it takes to be an effective student writer isn’t some ambi-

guous knowledge of writing or inborn aptitude for it, but rather an understanding of the genre of academic writing.

When students come into the Writing Center frustrated and stressed over an assignment, I know this often stems from simply not being as conversant with the academic writing genre as a more experienced academic writer. My job is to help my tutees understand the academic writing genre and to help them bridge the gap between what they already know about writing and the conventions that professors and college institutions expect.

My status as peer to the tutees I work with positions me to provide a more accessible understanding of the too-often mystified genre of academic writing. Providing feedback that directly addresses working with the conventions of the academic writing genre and having discussions about this feedback allows me to explore all of the corners and turns of the world of academic discourse with my tutees.

Together, we begin to tame the beast that is college writing, and, by the end of the session, we both come out the other side a little less intimidated.

NOTHING MINOR WHEN YOU'RE AN ENGLISH MAJOR

SAFIYA PALMER

Being in a creative writing concentration has changed what it means to be an English major for me. Whenever I tell people my major, they automatically assume I want to be a teacher and love writing essays; however, that is not the case for me at all. I love the creative aspect of my major. I strive when it comes to poetry, playwriting, and short stories, while reading literature and writing persuasive essays are not my forte. This doesn't take away from my ability to write eloquently and professionally like my peers, I just prefer using my imagination as a source, rather than facts and research.

Being an English major at Eastern has opened doors for me that I never even considered knocking on. I've interned for publishing a poetry book, been a teaching assistant, and even interned editing this very newsletter. I always knew I loved to write, but I never explored the different ways that it could be my main profession, until now. English is a liberal arts major, so being a teacher is only one of many options. Being a good writer helps you get any job in any field because it is an essential skill, as well as being able to communicate and articulate your words.

It wasn't an automatic decision for me to become an English major. Over the course of my 3 1/2 years at Eastern, I changed my major roughly 5 times, switching between combinations of Business, Psychology, Art, and English. In the end, I stuck with creative writing and a minor in painting and drawing. I'm finishing my undergrad education a semester early, and plan on continuing to explore the many different branches of creative writing as both a career and a hobby. I always keep the mindset of ultimately being my own boss and having multiple sources of income.

Although I will be looking for a career that uses my English major after I graduate, I will continue

to keep my art business running and work on publishing poetry and novels. This major is too versatile to stick to only one career and I plan on making the best of it.



Dandelion
Safiya Palmer

I apologize in advance if I dissociate
like dandelion seeds in soft winds.
I like to transport when convenient,
and you can try to hold my attention
but it may slip through your fingers
and back into my stream of thoughts,
Where I float in an abyss of memories
and a future that is familiarly unfamiliar,
because I've worked it through my head
before it ever got a chance to come to pass.
But you can be my compass,
when things go south,
show me where the sun sets,
and I'll rest with you, hoarding its horizon
with my anxiety and holding you close
enough where I don't have to imagine
what you look like when you look at me.

STUDENT TEACHING AT ECSU

AMANDA HILL

While English majors have lots of choices of career paths, one of the most common is teaching. Eastern offers many ways for students to earn a degree and achieve teaching certification in their four (or five) years at the university.

In order to learn more about the life of a student teacher at Eastern, I spoke with Kathryn Kauffman, a junior studying Early Childhood Education and General Psychology. She is planning to work with children in preschool or kindergarten and is also looking to get certified in special education in preschool.

When asked what made her want to get into teaching, Kauffman stated, “I have always loved working with children and from a young age, I babysat. I got my first job at a daycare when I was 16 and have worked there for the past 5 years. Working with children is very rewarding and it is so cool to see how they grow and learn so much each day. I want to be someone who can add to their learning, help them through their issues, and educate them in school, as well as life.”

A vital part of teaching is classroom management, and I wanted to know more about how Kauffman

thought about running her own classes in the future. “I want to create a safe space for children that is geared towards inclusion as well as using real world examples to help them learn. I want them to feel comfortable sharing experiences and learning from others. Additionally, we are discussing in one of my classes how valuable play is in the classroom as well as making sure each assignment or assessment has a purpose behind it. I think these are very important to ensure children are staying engaged and getting the most out of their time at school.”

I asked Kauffman if she had any advice for future. “They need to be flexible,” she said; “Children are very unpredictable and often schedules or plans for the day can get derailed. It is important to have many backup plans as well as sometimes letting students guide their own learning.”

Teaching certification through Eastern is a great opportunity provided to students across varying majors. If you are passionate about education and like working with students, definitely look into pursuing a career in teaching!



Frances Benjamin Johnston. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/2001703676/>.

SIGMA TAU DELTA: A LOOK INTO THE ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY



(Some of) the Fall 2021 inductees

AMANDA HILL

Sigma Tau Delta is the English honor society, recognizing students who have distinguished themselves in English studies. Students maintaining at least 3.0 overall GPA (with a 3.5 in their English courses) are eligible for induction, subject to nomination and approval by English department faculty. Membership in Sigma Tau Delta can bring students more than just a nice line on their résumés, since members are eligible to apply for competitive national scholarships, internships, and stipends.

While Sigma Tau Delta is an English Honor Society, Eastern's Sigma chapter aims to reach students beyond the English department. In the Fall, the group was able to put on two outdoor events—an ice cream social and an apple cider social—that drew students from across campus. They were also able to organize a book drive where students could share their favorite literature with others while snapping up some good bargains.

I interviewed Dr. Allison Speicher, the faculty advisor for Eastern's Sigma Tau Delta chapter, to find out more about the group and its events. Dr. Speicher emphasized that Sigma wants its events to provide a chance for students, faculty, and staff to get together outside the classroom.

The group raises money through events like the book drive, but also by selling t-shirts and other merchandise that let people show their love of the subject. Those funds allow the group to plan events where they give out free food to those attending. When asked what she wanted students to know about Sigma, Dr. Speicher replied that everyone is always welcome at Sigma events—they're not just for English majors.

Keep an eye out for more Sigma events in the Spring, and throughout the year, and bring your non-English-major friends along for the fun.

INTRODUCING EASTERN'S BOOK CLUB

MELODY CABARROGUIS

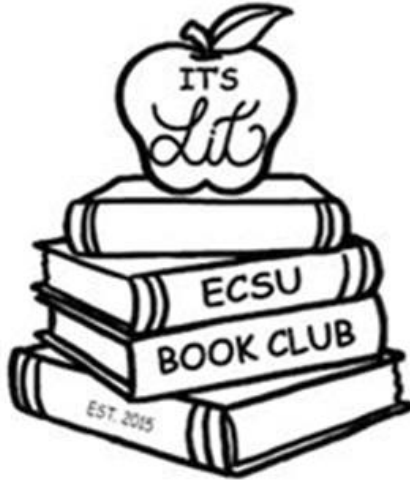
ECSU's Book Club was started a year ago by then-freshman students. I spoke with Book Club president Sierra Madden and vice president Jessica Vieira to find out how the club started, what their goals are, and the kinds of activities they organize.

Sierra, the current president of the club, attended the club fair last year and noticed that there was no book club. So, with the help of a friend and Snapchat, Sierra invited students to start one. "We were figuring out how to get meeting times, there were a lot of technicalities that you need to fill out. There were a lot of forms we need to figure out."

Though it took the entire Fall semester to prepare, the club started holding meetings during the Spring semester (all meetings were held online, due to the pandemic). Those conversations went nicely, in large part because the group was just the right size. "There weren't many of us. We have an intimate group, and we just have discussions bi-weekly. It definitely worked with the number of people we had at the time."

While the Book Club has more members now, they still have good conversations regarding the books they read. They were trying different ways to get every member involved. I asked what kind of questions are asked in their discussions and they answered, "We are still a group. We're trying different things to see what people like. Our first discussion was really open, and anyone can talk."

Two of the books the club has read so far are *Liar's Dictionary* by Eley Williams and *Anxious People*



by Fredrik Backman, both of which are realistic fiction. Their favorite genre is Adventure and Fantasy, but they said that they would surely try different genres in future meetings.

Sierra explained how the club picks books to read. "We send out a survey asking what genre everyone would like to read and for this one, each person in the E-board came out with a book. The E-board narrowed down the list and had people vote off that. Whichever book has the highest vote is the

book that we'll read."

Sierra and Jessica emphasized the importance of reading and community. The club's mission statement says that its goal is to "bring back the joy of reading for students that are already stressed with their academics. ... [T]he Eastern Book Club provides a space for readers to discuss their opinions and connect with other students through literature."

Having a Book Club will help foster communication. Books and stories help us understand other perspectives and connect with one another. Reading should be more than just analyzing texts or memorizing facts. There should be wonder, imagination, and conversation. Indeed, it should be fun. The Book Club at ECSU and book clubs across the nation can help bring back the interest and the joy of reading, and remind people that reading shouldn't be a responsibility but a leisure, that it shouldn't be an assignment, but a hobby.

In addition to their discussions of books, the Book Club sponsors events. They hosted a Poetry Slam Poetry in December, and will have an author talk in the Spring 2022 semester, with more events planned for the future.

ECSU'S CREATIVE WRITING CLUB E-BOARD ATTENDS THE CT LITERARY FESTIVAL



Creative Writing Club at CT Literary Festival

COLLEEN GOFF

Every year, the Connecticut Literary Festival, produced by students and staff at Central Connecticut State University, comes to Real Art Ways in Hartford in celebration of literature. In addition to being a producer, book publisher, and author, Jotham Burello is the CT Literary Festival Director. He also directs the Yale Writers' Workshop and teaches creative writing at CCSU. Every fall, hundreds of literary lovers gather here to listen to readings, meet authors, and mingle with publishers and creative writers.

On Saturday, October 23rd, the Creative Writing Club E-board members arrived with Professor Daniel Donaghy, the club's advisor, around 9 a.m. to set up our table in the Reader's Marketplace. In the Reader's Marketplace, over a dozen tables were available for authors, publishers, editors, and

small shops to sell books and trinkets and promote literary journals.

ECSU's Creative Writing Club's table had editions of *Here: a poetry journal* for sale as well as free editions of *Eastern Exposure*. Dr. Donaghy edits *Here* with ECSU students yearly, and the journal is filled with talented writers from all over the world. *Eastern Exposure* is the Creative Writing Club's literary magazine that publishes Eastern student's creative work, including poetry, short stories, and photography, and is curated by the club every year. As the festival went on, more and more editions of *Here* sold, and almost all the free copies of *Eastern Exposure* were taken.

E-board members had a blast going from table to table, purchasing books, collecting free

Creative Writing club at the CT Literary Festival (cont.)



Typewriter at the event

literary journals, and talking to published authors about their new books.

In the Reader's Marketplace, I had the pleasure of meeting Ron Blumenfeld, a retired physician who just published his debut novel, *The King's Anatomist: The Journey of Andreas Vesalius*. He described what his historical mystery novel was about and signed my copy.

Later, the E-board members sat down in the Raw Café to hear readings from Anna Qu and Professor Christopher Torockio of Eastern's English Department. Qu read from her novel *Made In China*, which describes her experience working as a child laborer in her family's sweatshop in Queens, New York. Dr. Torockio read from his novel *The Soul Hunters*, which is a riveting fiction about navigating life through loss. After the reading, I was able to purchase Qu's novel and have a conversation with her; Dr. Torockio also signed my copy of *The Soul Hunters*.

All of the E-board members had the opportunity to attend readings in the Theater, where *America on Fire* author Elizabeth Hinton read from her book and answered questions from the audience.

R. J. Julia Booksellers had tons of books for sale, including books written by the authors who were reading in the Theater or Café. (All of the books I've mentioned are available at Amazon, certainly; but you could also get them from a local book shop like R. J. Julia, instead: if you don't see a title, ask!)

The 2021 *Connecticut Literary Anthology* was for sale at the event, which includes works by Dr. Donaghy, Dr. Torockio, and Dr. Raouf Mama. Another cool addition to the festival was the Type-Writer Gallery, where you could type on a typewriter and post your work up on the wall in the room. Additionally, musicians played music live in between readings in the Café which could be heard from across the festival.

Before we headed back to Eastern, a few E-board members performed poems in the Tiny Reading Gallery. First, I (club president) performed two pieces, then Samantha Vertucci, the club's treasurer, performed a piece. Claire Treacy, the club's vice president, performed two pieces afterwards. Dr. Mama and Dr. Donaghy were there applauding for us all after each poem was performed. This was the first time any of us had performed at an event in front of a small crowd, and it was a great experience for us all.



English literature is a kind of training in social ethics. English trains you to handle a body of information in a way that is conducive to action.

— Marilyn Butler —

AZ QUOTES

SPOTLIGHT ON ENG 499: INDEPENDENT SENIOR CAPSTONES

Queer and Gendered Representations in Chaucer

ANNA LINDH

In thinking about my capstone project, I immediately knew I wanted to focus on the works of Geoffrey Chaucer. After being introduced to Chaucer a couple of years ago, my fascination only grew as time passed.

I'll admit, I was terrified when I first looked at the capstone components last year, but after submitting my proposal it felt a lot more doable. After confirming with the English department that I could fulfill all six capstone credits in one semester, Dr. Clermont-Ferrand and I met several times to discuss the scope of the project. Though I had initially imagined focusing entirely on *The Canterbury Tales*, we agreed that expanding the primary sources to a couple of Chaucer's other works would only strengthen my research. In the end, building the syllabus for my project was actually a lot of fun!

Because I was already quite familiar with *The Canterbury Tales*, Dr. Clermont-Ferrand and I decided that it would make sense to spend the summer rereading the tales I wanted to discuss so I would be able to focus on the poems I was less familiar with in the Fall. Within the first three weeks of the semester, I had finished reading my primary sources, and Dr. Clermont-Ferrand and I began meeting weekly to discuss passages and concepts I wanted to address in my project.

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While most English majors fulfill their senior capstone requirement with the two-semester seminar sequence of ENG 461 and ENG 462, some opt for a different route.

ENG 499 allows a student with a clear idea for a project to work one-on-one with a faculty mentor to design and complete a substantial independent project. Work in ENG 499 often builds on topics that students had begun to explore in earlier coursework, but that they want to pursue further.

Here, we hear from Anna Lindh, who completed an independent capstone with Professor Clermont-Ferrand in Fall 2021; and from Colleen Goff, who will be working on a second semester of ENG 499 with Professor Donaghy in Spring 2022.

Anti-Racist Poetry and Poetics

COLLEEN GOFF

As my senior year approached, I knew I wanted to fulfill my capstone requirement through Directed Research. I always enjoyed creative writing and knew I wanted to create something that represents who I am before graduating.

Although I used to write tons of fiction, I found a passion for writing poetry during my first poetry course at Eastern, Writing Poetry, with Professor Donaghy. I asked Dr. Donaghy if he'd be willing to be my Directed Research instructor, and he was more than happy to work with me.

Initially, Dr. Donaghy and I discussed our project goals: to have a complete collection of about forty poems by the end of the Spring 2022 semester, with about twenty poems written and revised each semester. Besides writing poems, my research consists of reading poets across different time periods and cultures to immerse myself in poetry and widen my literary canon.

So far, I've researched Kim Addonizio's poems, specifically from her collection *Tell Me*. Her poetry is inspirational for me because she writes about womanhood, heartbreak, and mental health, all things I relate to and enjoy writing about myself. I've researched Harry Humes's work, which is heavily inspired by his life growing up in a small coal mining town in Pennsylvania

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Lindh (continued)

My capstone paper is titled, “And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.’: Queer and Gendered Representations in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, the *Legend of Good Women*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*.” In my research, I examined the roles of queer



characters as well as stereotypically masculine and feminine characters within Chaucer’s poems.

The pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales* are quite revealing when examined through the lens of Queer and Gender theory. I examine the Reeve, the Wife of Bath, and Sir Thopas as vital characters in the *Tales*. I also discuss the *Legend of Good Women* as a work of satire and compare the stereotypical gender roles presented in that poem to those of *Troilus and Criseyde*. In exploring the representations of these characters, I came to my own conclusions regarding what they may reveal about Chaucer’s own potential queerness.

Working on this research project was such a pleasure and it really did fly by. Each week, Dr. Clermont-Ferrand and I would discuss around five sources, and I found that coming prepared with specific quotes I wanted to discuss from each article was the best way to go about it. This made the writing stage much less daunting. I loved collaborating with Dr. Clermont-Ferrand on this research as well as the freedom I had in choosing how to go about presenting my thoughts and findings.

Goff (continued)

and his family’s experiences with coal mining. And I’ve read Reginald Dwayne Betts’s *Felon*, which describes his experiences as a Black American, including experiencing incarceration at age sixteen for carjacking. Through researching poetry, I’m able to analyze how these poets write and how they allow their unique voices to come through their work.

Most of my poetry is inspired by my own life experiences as well as social justice issues in America. I often write about my life growing up in an inner city, Waterbury, and experiences I’ve had with witnessing drug abuse, violence, and the deaths of friends. I also write about my estranged and incarcerated father, who I recently came in touch with after seven years.

Womanhood, mental health struggles, selfhood, identity, love, heartbreak, and loss are themes that currently occupy my work. My most important pieces, though, are my anti-racist pieces

Womanhood, mental health struggles, selfhood, identity, love, heartbreak, and loss are themes that currently occupy my work. My most important pieces, though, are my anti-racist pieces, in which I attempt to speak directly to ignorant white people who are not committed to anti-racism. Currently, I have completed twenty poems for this semester that I plan on editing and completing over winter break. I look forward to continuing my Directed Research with Dr. Donaghy and completing my first ever collection of poetry.

COLLEEN GOFF - "SAGGING PANTS ISN'T THE ISSUE"

Death fills the air of my aunt's Subaru,
taps on the window glass
and is ready to escape into the world
after we drive past a Black man on the street, and
she spews
"No wonder they can't run from the police, his
pants are at his feet!"
and she smirks and scoffs as I freeze
and I swear for a second I could see his body
laying lifelessly.

Lifelessly like 12-year-old Tamir Rice, who
couldn't run
for his life, not because his pants were sagging
but because
you can't really outrun a bullet, the speed of light
fired at him twice within the two seconds police
had him in sight.
He died unaware as to why, unaware that police
see
Black boys as violent beings before they even
reach their teens, unaware as to why even the
park
is not a safe place for him to run free.

Lifelessly like 26-year-old Breonna Taylor who
couldn't run,
not because she was sagging her pants but
because she was already home
with no safer place to go when cops and their
ammo
broke down her front door and shot her dead
by her own bed, her life fleeing Earth
as 32 bullets tore through her apartment walls,
tore
through her bedsheets tore through her dresser
tore through her home
as 6 bullets tore through her being before she
could even speak.

Lifelessly like 46-year-old George Floyd who
couldn't run,
not because he was sagging his pants but because
of the police-knee nudged
in the crevasse of his neck, because of the air that
was quickly fleeing

from his lungs as he used his last breath to plead
for his life,
and his words only echoed past White ears,
echoed off into history
echoed off into that place of silenced voices,
unheard screams
unheard by too many, unheard pleas that end up
lost and re-screamed
another day by another Black person.

Lifelessly like Eric Gardner, lifelessly like Michael
Brown, lifelessly
like Walter Scott, like Alton Sterling,
like Philando Castile, like Stephon Clark,
like Jamarri Tarver, like Tyree Davis,
like Tina Marie Davis, like Brandon Dionte
Roberts,
like Kwame Jones, like Miciah Lee,
like Elijah McClain, like Ahmaud Arbery,
like Janet Wilson,
like the countless others
who can't run from police brutality,
who can't run from systematic racism,
who can't run from the bloody racist history of
this nation,
who can't run from White people like White
people
run from it all, who can't run from the racism
White people
run people of color into the ground with, into
their graves
with, and my aunt in her Subaru, who is also a
New Jersey judge
must know this and act
like she just doesn't.

I can only feel her death-wish,
thick and hot in the air of her car,
knowing racism never stays confined to the racist.
It emits from her skin like rancid must,
doesn't wash off in the shower,
follows her to work in the courthouse
and fills the air she surrounds
with its deadly pollution.

AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR CHIRICO

AMANDA HILL & MELODY CABARROGUIS

When Eastern's campus closed down in Spring of 2020, Professor Miriam Chirico gave the students in her Honors colloquium a new kind of assignment.

In this piece, students were to "braid" together three different "strands" to form a coherent essay. Students were to bring reflection on their own experience during the pandemic into conversation with ideas drawn from class discussion, and ideas they encountered in *The New Yorker* magazine's "Dispatches from a Pandemic."

Professor Chirico wanted students to take an imaginative snapshot of what the pandemic meant to them and capture that mental image in words on paper. The students' writing, she thought, could serve as a testimony to a moment in time that we won't be able to go back to.

Some of the work that students produced for this assignment grew beyond the confines of the class. Two students' essays were published in the *Manchester Journal Inquirer*, and six others were featured on Eastern's web site.

It was there that Dr. Brian McKenzie of Maynooth University in Ireland came across them and thought they could be well suited for his university's common experience course for first-year students: in the Fall, more than 1,000 Maynooth students were reading what Eastern students had to say about life during the pandemic on the other side of the Atlantic.

Though it departed from the familiar essay form, Dr. Chirico's students really took to the assignment.

Hi Dr. Chirico!

I wanted to express my gratitude for your assigning of the "Dispatches from the Pandemic" in our Great Ideas class from Spring 2020. I must admit that at the time it was assigned, I didn't totally understand what it sought to accomplish, since I don't think it had yet sunk in that we were experiencing a mass trauma. As time has passed and we have begun to heal, however, my outlook has changed.

I feel that we are in some way coming out on the other end of the pandemic this semester and returning to about as much normality as is possible, given the state of things. I think that as daily life gets closer to how it felt prior to the pandemic, it'll be that much more important to reflect on how things were at the height of all the fear and chaos. I recently reread my dispatch, and even though it seems like not much time has passed, the mental state that I was in while writing is almost unrecognizable now. I think having a piece of writing that captures life during a daily crisis is a unique opportunity, and I have a feeling my appreciation of it will only grow with time."

English major Benjamin Dionne was a student in Professor Chirico's class. His essay was published in the Manchester, CT *Journal Inquirer* of May 30, 2020.

Attitudes Towards Death Benjamin Dionne

On February 24th, 2020, my grandmother passed away. She was one of the most influential people in my life and I was shattered when I got the news. Though she had been declining in health for three years before her death, I never really considered what my life would be like without her. I came home from college the next day to join my family in mourning. We sat down with the rabbi of my grandparents' synagogue and told him everything he needed to know about the life of my grandmother, how she dropped out of college to raise her family, how she was the world's greatest hostess, and how she loved her grandchildren more than life itself. The next day we lowered her into the ground, surrounded by her family and her closest friends. Later, sitting shiva in my packed house, we shared food and stories, and watched the memorial candle burn down. At the end of the night, looking around at all the people who loved and cared for her, I smiled; I realized she died knowing how loved she was.

This was all about two weeks before the implementation of widespread quarantine in the United States. Losing a family member so close to the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic has made me think about my attitudes towards death, as well as those of the people around me. How do we respond to mass death as a society?

So many lives lost in a matter of weeks, and yet our attitudes towards this death are pointedly different than instances of mass death in recent American history. New York Times journalist Peter Baker points out in his April 30 article, "Amid a Rising Death Toll, Trump Leaves the Grieving to Others," that we as a nation have yet to truly acknowledge the devastation this pandemic has caused: "As the death toll from the coronavirus over eight weeks surpasses the total American Military casualties in eight years of major combat in Vietnam, Mr. Trump has led no national mourning." After Vietnam, we honored the lives of those we lost with memorials, with services of nationwide mourning, and yet somehow in a time of more lives lost, we have yet to publicly address the impact of these deaths on the American people. Why the difference?

Even I have found my reactions towards death changing in the midst of the pandemic. I lost two more



people who were important to me because of the coronavirus. These people were kind and loving to me and my family for many years, but their passing affected me quite differently than my grandmother's death had only a month before. I was sad for their deaths, but there was no way for me to express it. There was no funeral service I could attend, no gravesite I could lay flowers upon, no family I could console. In this time of tragedy, we were denied all of the traditions that comprise grieving. We could not come together as a community to celebrate their lives. Instead it was as if they had joined the ranks of the 80,000 people in the statistic, defined not by the way they lived, but by the way they died. I was confused with myself. What could I do to honor these people whom I loved so much, in the same way we had honored my grandmother?

T.S. Eliot continues his description of the society. The next lines in *The Waste Land* read, "He who was living is now dead / We who were living are now dying / With a little patience." In our current situation, we are the people of *The Waste Land*. Those of us not infected are still plagued by fear and uncertainty. We are living, but the world around us is still dying and all we can do is wait it out. We can't think about remembering the dead in the ways we always have, because people continue to die at alarming rates. Our rituals of mourning have been halted by the pandemic. We can't take part in the restorative act of communal memory, our distinct ability to bring our loved ones back by sharing the stories of their lives.

It is important for us as a nation to keep in mind the humanity behind the rising numbers, even though we feel trapped in a *Waste Land*-esque situation. Someday the deaths will slow down and we will be able to live again. And when we do, we must figure out, as a society, how to mourn for those who we could not honor during the pandemic. When we who were living are no longer dying, how will we remember the dead?

ENGLISH MAJOR ALUMNA, TAYLOR HAMMOND

MELODY CABARROGUIS & AMANDA HILL

Before she was Eastern's Director of Financial Aid Operations, Taylor Hammond was an ECSU English major. We talked with her about her experiences as an English major and how she uses the skills she developed in her administrative work, communication with students, and more.

One of the skills that she emphasized was attention to detail. Her work includes reading admission essays from students. She is also responsible for creating and sending different emails and letters to prospective students about the school and financial aid. All of these responsibilities call for the kind of attention to detail that English majors develop through careful critical reading and writing.

At one point Hammond noted, "The major selling point in having [an English] degree is that you have that understanding of the language and that you are able to read, write, and communicate well. Every single job in the world needs the ability to communicate clearly and effectively."

Perhaps predictably for an English major, Hammond said that she enjoyed and rigorously studied different books and texts when she was an undergraduate. "I think the opportunity English majors have to read new books but also appreciate old things helps you put yourself in another person's shoes. And too many times, students and people in general are not able to do that because they're not immersing themselves in that experience. I think that it is the duty of literature that's out there that we get exposed to in our English program." She encourages students to continue reading, and not just in the classroom.

One piece of advice she had for English majors was to get to know your professors outside of the classroom and learn from them. She said

"It always seems impossible until it's done."



Taylor Hammond

that some of her most valuable experiences were sitting one-on-one with professors to learn how to be a better writer. Some of the best writing practices that she's developed weren't covered in class, but came up in communication with her instructors.

Besides being an English major, Hammond was also involved in many extracurricular activities. She was a student center advisor, student center assistant, competitive dance team member, student orientation counselor, and a CCE volunteer. She emphasized that students should "say yes to different opportunities" because they give students the opportunity to work with diverse groups of people, develop their networks, and gain experience for future jobs.

Hammond encouraged English majors to take the skills they learn in the major and apply them in the real world. Her success was influenced by how she used the opportunities that were given to her. She said that one of her favorite quotes is by Nelson Mandela who said, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

ENGLISH NIGHT

On Tuesday, December 7, the English department held its first (sort of) in-person English Night in two years in the Betty Tipton Room. Ordinarily, English Night is an opportunity for English majors and their families to come together to recognize student accomplishments and to hear presentations of capstone work by graduating seniors. Because of continuing pandemic restrictions, however, attendance this year was limited to students enrolled in English 461 and English 462, as well as winners of departmental awards and inductees into Sigma Tau Delta.

The event started with the presentation of awards for distinguished student work. There were four awards to announce this semester.

Lilly Alicea was the recipient of this year's Constance Campo Scholarship, named in memory of a long-time staff member in the English department office. This award is presented each year to a non-traditional student who has demonstrated excellence in their studies. The Campo scholarship is awarded to someone who has shown sensitivity to gender and diversity issues, as did Ms. Campo.

This year's Alexander "Sandy" Taylor Scholarship was awarded to **Colleen Goff**. The Taylor scholarship was named in honor of Sandy Taylor, an Eastern professor and founder (with his wife, Judith Doyle) of Curbstone Press. In awarding the scholarship, the department gives preference to students who demonstrate a commitment to peace and the rights of mankind and who show an interest in poetry.

With the support of Eastern's Office of Institutional Advancement, the English department was able to recognize both a winner and a runner-up for this year's Celia Catlett Prize. This prize recognizes a distinguished senior capstone project, and was created in memory of Professor Celia Catlett, who taught in Eastern's English department from 1972 until her retirement in 2001. The winner of this year's Catlett Prize was

Kaylee Blackwood (21), for her novella *Once We Meet*, which she wrote as part of Professor Torockio's capstone seminar on "The Craft of the Novel." The runner-up was **Liz Colón (21)**, whose memoir, *Puertorriqueña y Yo*, was completed as part of a Directed Research capstone with Dr. Christine Garcia.

Next on the program was the induction of new members into Eastern's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society. Chapter president **Gabriela Paxi** and vice president **Evelyn Musto** initiated 31 new members, leading new inductees in the Sigma pledge and awarding them their honors cords.

Congratulations to new members of Sigma Tau Delta!

Grace Adams	Shannon Goff	Alyssa Meneo
Aspen Ben Azulay	Alexia Hanson	Faith Parker
Margaret Bielaczyc	Maisie Hayes	Natalie Pyle
Melody Cabarroguis	Felicia Horne	Adeba Reza
Jordan Chenette	Adam Jablonski	Clelie-Ann Ryan
Kai-li M. Davey	Rachel Jackman	Jackie Santella
Natalie Devlin	Autumn Jackson	Anna Skaret
Benjamin Dionne	Brylene Laws	Emma Walton
Rachel Drouin	Anna Lindh	Jessica Wlochowski
Riley Duhamel	Jenna Lord	
Colleen Goff	Julianne Martin	

Professor Barbara Liu then introduced the presenters from her capstone seminar on "American Gods: Religious Expression in the US," which explored the diverse roles that religious expression has played in public life in the United States, for good and ill, from its colonial beginnings to the present.

Participants in Professor Liu's seminar had chosen two of their classmates to represent the kinds of work that students carried out from the Spring of 2021 into the Fall of that year. **Molly Ann Curry** presented from her critical essay, "We Were the Sacrificed': Environmental Conquest as Religious Conquest in Linda Hogan's *Power*," and **Allison Green** discussed and read excerpts from her novella, *The Cause in His Creation*.

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Congratulations to Professors **Susan DeRosa** and **Reginald Flood** for their promotions to the rank of Professor!

Essays by students in Professor **Miriam Chirico's** Spring 2020 Honors colloquium were adopted as a common reading for more than 1,000 incoming students at Maynooth University in Ireland. (See news item on p. 16, as well as an essay originally written for this class by English major and University Honors scholar **Benjamin Dionne** on p. 17.)

ECSU English major **Colleen Goff** was named one of four Connecticut Student Touring Poets by the 2021-22 Connecticut Poetry Circuit panel. Colleen and her peers will read their work on campuses and at poetry festivals around the state this Spring. Look for an event at Eastern in April and, in the meantime, check out some of Colleen's work on p. 15.

In December, Professor **Raouf Mama** was named the 2021 recipient of the 2021 Grand Prix Littéraire du Bénin. (The equivalent honor in the US would be the National Book Award or the Pul-



itzer Prize.) Professor Mama was recognized for his *La Jarre Trouée*, an historical tale recounting how King Ghezo used a jar covered with holes to teach the people of Dahomey about unity and warn them against the danger of fratricidal conflict.

Thanks to our Contributors:

Aspen Ben Azulay
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Anna Lindh
Safiya Palmer
Carly Prentiss
Em(ma) Walton