

# KEEP-ENG IN TOUCH

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Dear alumni, current students, and friends of the English Department at Eastern:

Welcome to the Fall 2017 edition of Keep-ENG in Touch. Thanks to the efforts of co-editors Jordan Corey and Elena Sorrentino, as well as a number of talented student writers, it's an engaging look at what has been going on in our department since May.

Jordan and Elena have also worked hard to keep our social media presence relevant, interesting, and fun, while also expanding it to include Snapchat. And students can now stay up-to-date with English news and events via text message. I hope you'll connect and keep in touch with us through those venues, too. See the back of this issue for details.

Finally, to current students: if you would like a for-credit internship helping to edit the Spring 2018 edition of this newsletter and overseeing our social media presence, please send me an email. I'll get back to you with more information.

Peace.  
Dr. Barbara Little Liu  
liub@easternct.edu



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

We are proud to present the Fall 2017 edition of Keep-ENG in Touch. We would like to thank Dr. Liu for all of her help throughout our process of creating it, in addition to all of the contributors who wrote the pieces that fill these pages. This would not have been accomplished unless we had the support and help from all of you. We hope that you enjoy the newsletter!

Sincerely,  
Jordan Corey & Elena Sorrentino



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## DR. GARCIA'S FIRST SEMESTER AT EASTERN!



By: Jessica Maloney

During her first year as a professor at Eastern, Dr. Christine Garcia stands in awe of the brilliance of the faculty and staff. Every time she hears about the research and writing of a fellow professor, she wishes that she, too, could take one of their classes and learn more about the important scholarship happening at Eastern. Garcia is trying to enjoy the moment while she can, and not solely focus on the next big event or idea in academia. Holding an undergraduate and master's degree in English Language and Literature, Garcia did not find Rhetoric and Writing studies until she was given the chance to teach freshman composition during her master's program. Her alma mater, Angelo State, was short on writing teachers, and asked the Literature graduate students if they wanted to pick up extra courses. Even though she had never taught writing, Garcia jumped at the chance. Turns out, she loved it. After that, she began researching Ph.D. programs in Rhetoric and Writing, and here she is today.

As an undergraduate student, Garcia claims she was an "absolute terror," and if she could go back, would offer herself the advice to listen to her professors. Despite being an eager student ready to discuss and argue the texts that were being studied, she did not practice listening enough. However, due to the teachings of Rhetoric, she is a much better listener now.

The advice she has for students who hope to join the world of academia is to start making a good impression now, during the undergraduate years. Being an active and competitive academic is not for the faint of heart, and anyone looking towards a Ph.D.

or graduate degree in general, should start dressing, speaking, and working as someone already in the academic field.

Garcia also mentions that there were hurdles in her journey as a female Latina scholar. There are only .2% Latinx faculty in Rhetoric and Composition studies. The larger hurdles included staying true to herself in a field of study where people such as herself are grossly underrepresented, and not submitting to the pressures to conform. That said, Garcia does not feel that the hurdles have been hindrances, but rather opportunities for personal growth and to teach those around her in academia that Latinas are capable and there to do good work.

**"The larger hurdles included staying true to herself in a field of study where people such as herself are grossly underrepresented, and not submitting to the pressures to conform."**

Garcia's overall message for her students is that writing is the absolute best conduit for being a solid student, professional, and human being. Her teaching style is one adherent to the "write, write, write"

method, where she focuses on "writing, writing some more, and then writing a bit more for good measure." She wants her writers to enjoy and appreciate it. Aside from writing, Dr. Garcia believes her students should make time to listen to what others are saying and think about opposing perspectives. College is largely about forming our own opinions and becoming better human beings. Diversity doesn't truly happen unless people drop pretense and engage each other in honest interactions. Thus, Dr. Garcia advises us to speak to each other and be kind.

## CREATIVE WRITING CLUB EVENTS

### Creative Writing Coffee House

By: Samantha Carmen

On Nov. 7, the Creative Writing Club, previously known as the Writers' Guild, held their first Coffee House event of the semester. For those of you who don't know what the Coffee Houses are, they are usually one of two things. The most common Coffee Houses put on by Creative Writing Club are open-mic platforms for students. The second version of the Coffee Houses includes visiting authors who come to campus and read their own published works.

The Coffee House I attended happened to be an open-mic, which meant that anyone was able to go on stage to read either their own work or the work of another author. Students could read poetry, short stories, perform skits, sing, dance, etc. During this Coffee House, a majority of students sang and read poetry—although we did have a great dance number towards the end. As for the students who sang, some pieces were original compositions. It was great to see the raw talent that Eastern students have.

My favorite poem that was read was a love poem about grilled cheese. It was really "cheesy." Poetry is usually associated with some sort of strong emotion, so it was funny to see this twist. What I love about these types of events is that they're judgment-free places where students get to express themselves. They allow us to hear the words that come from their

hearts. It's so cool to see people open up in a relaxed setting. There are many artistic souls at Eastern, and this is something that gives them a chance to share their abilities.

The Creative Writing Club also provides a venue for student expression by publishing Eastern's literary magazine, *Eastern Exposure*, every year. It's composed of poems, short stories, plays, and artwork all by Eastern students. "I think any student publication such as the *Eastern Exposure* is important to have on campus, because it gives a voice to people who feel silenced and highlights the talents of a community via different mediums," said Allison Brown, the vice president of the club. "It gives students a safe place to express themselves creatively and have their work published as an undergrad."

There will be a few more Coffee Houses next semester, so make sure to keep an eye out so that you, too, can have good food, drink some coffee or hot chocolate, and enjoy performances by gifted Eastern students. "It's really awesome that our Coffee Houses give students this opportunity to share their work in a safe and judgment-free environment," Brooke Cochrane, the president of the Creative Writing Club told me while watching students on stage. "I can't wait to do more in the spring."

### José B. Gonzalez Visits Eastern

By: Brooke Cochrane

José B. Gonzalez is a talented poet who is originally from El Salvador and currently lives in New London, Connecticut. He immigrated to America when he was eight years old, when he reunited with his family after they fled their home country. He is the author of the poetry collection *Toys Made of Rock*, which was released in 2015. Gonzalez has also published poetry in journals like "The Teacher's Voice," "Colere" and "Palabra." He has presented his work at colleges such as University of Florida, Cornell University, Harvard University, and now, Eastern Connecticut State University.

Gonzalez came to Eastern on Thursday, Nov. 30, and did a wonderful poetry reading in the Science Building. I had the pleasure of introducing him to the audience, telling them of his story and how he came to be where he is today. When he was young, Gonzalez was tormented for not speaking English. To prove them wrong, he told himself he was going to get the highest possible degree in English — a Ph.D. As a successful published author and a well-respected poet, it is safe to say he did more than that.

Gonzalez read a series of poems from his book, my favorite being "When Your Father is the School

Janitor." It's about, well, his father being the school janitor. But it feels like it's so much more. The further you get into the poem, the more you realize it's about his father who is sick and dying. He has to help his father work after school because he's becoming weak. The last stanzas of the poem shook me to my core: "The school janitor. Only still. Lonely still. Back and forth. The school janitor. Only still. Lonely. Still." It's pure talent.

Gonzalez made the crowd laugh with subtle jokes and he spoke with great confidence. It was surely an honor to have him here at Eastern. After the reading, Gonzalez, Dr. Donaghy, myself, and other students and faculty went out to dinner at the Willimantic Brewing Company. It was a fun time, and we got to know him a bit more over a good meal.



# FACULTY FIRESIDES



**Contributors:** Shelby Eccleston, Jordan Corey, Elena Sorrentino

## DR. GARCIA



Dr. Christine Garcia grew up in a small rural town in West Texas, only eight hours from Albuquerque, New Mexico. As a woman from West Texas, obtaining her doctorate came with some hurdles. While she received

a lot of support getting her bachelor's and master's degrees, as she went to get a doctorate, it was clear that her path to the Ph.D. would be a challenging one. This did not deter her, as she is focused and has a passion for writing—the passion that led her astray from her small rural town in West Texas to Albuquerque in the first place.

In Albuquerque, she was amazed by the lively culture it had to offer, the pride of being Latinx that she now embraces in her teaching. There was even a rich poetry scene there, something that never appeared in her conservative hometown. Albuquerque eventually became home; however, after receiving her

*"Garcia... believes that women of color need to be represented in her field of study and in academia in general."*

doctorate in Rhetoric and Composition, Garcia knew it was time to pursue the job market and, consequently, move again.

This is how Dr. Garcia joined us at Eastern Connecticut State University as a new professor of Rhetoric and Composition, focusing on Latinx and Chicana Rhetoric. Being one of few Latina women in the Rhetoric and Composition field gives her a different outlook and drive regarding Chicana Rhetoric that has not always been fully explored in the past. This is a huge point of interest for Garcia, who believes that women of color need to be represented in her field of study and in academia in general. It leaves the job of making sure they get representation up to minority women in the field, like the professor herself; she is able to give voices to those who have been ignored.

Next semester, Dr. Garcia will be teaching a Chicana and Latinx Rhetoric class, which will explore the realm of Latina women and rhetoric, as well as discuss the societal issues that these works can reflect.

## DR. FLOOD

Dr. Reginald Flood's Faculty Fireside took place on October 11th. It was lively and well-attended, an obvious product of the fact that many of the people there specifically went to see him; he greeted each person individually. The atmosphere was thus warm, comfortable, and casual, which allowed for friendly, informative and intriguing banter. Several times throughout the event, Flood called students out in an attempt to encourage conversation.

The first portion of the discussion centered on his newest book, set for release on November 3rd. This book is a collection of poems based around and inspired by a series of collected slave narratives. After looking at over 1,000 different stories, Flood eventually narrowed his focus down to a handful. It was an endeavor that took him several years to complete. He also discussed his use of the Persona Poem, and how this mode of writing is difficult, because he is

## 🍁 DR. FLOOD CONT.



constantly faced with confronting the difficulty of the lives he is basing his pieces on. Although this will be his second book, Flood said that he has not yet written the book that he knows will be his personal favorite. He intends to write two more books

of poetry, and then continue on to compose a book of prose. Additionally, he remains an avid playwright. He stated that every day he feels privileged because he gets to do what he wants to do whenever he comes to work.

One student asked if he had advice to people looking to write their own book. His answer was to write every day, and that he believes youths have “more of an opportunity to write than ever before.” He said that taking these opportunities to practice the activity will help improve writing skills. That said, he cited his own favorite thing about writing: finishing.

Despite his love for writing, when asked if

would choose reading or writing, he said that he would always choose to read. Some of his favorite poets are Danzy Smith, Langston Hughes, and Gwendolyn Brooks.

However, not everything discussed at the Fireside dealt with Flood’s professional life. There were many quick insights into his life as a whole, complete with several fun facts. For example, his favorite color is purple and he enjoys Mo-Town as a music genre. He also spent a good portion of time talking about his family, mentioning that his daughter is following in his footsteps as a playwright.

Overall, it was an enlightening look into the life of a professor. I would say that it is a scene you wouldn’t be able to see within a classroom, but knowing Dr. Flood, it shows exactly what you would discover in his presence at any point—that he is a down-to-earth person who is willing to foster conversation and camaraderie.

***“He cited his own favorite thing about writing: finishing.”***

## 🍁 DR. FERRUCI

Oct. 25, Dr. Stephen Ferruci, professor of Composition Theory and Pedagogy, was featured at the third Faculty Fireside of the semester. Ferruci, who has been working full time as a professor since 1998, excitingly shared that he recently drafted a proposal to Cengage — an educational content, technology and services company — for his new, and second, textbook written in collaboration with Dr. Susan DeRosa. The textbook addresses multimodal forms of writing, such as composition through sound and video.

For the past few years, Ferruci has been incorporating film into his teaching through a course titled Rhetoric of the Hollywood Film, which has given him the opportunity to explore subjects like the representation of different ethnic groups in movies. The professor discussed how he tries to find films the students are not likely to have seen yet for them to study. This, he said, is not difficult, since most of the

movies he selects are not recently made — often generating mixed reviews among the class. The course, and its students, provides a multitude of insights as the realm of rhetoric working in film is explored.

While he clearly has a knack for teaching, Ferruci has not always been enthusiastic about education. In fact, he lightheartedly revealed that he was “a terrible high school student.” When he went on to college afterward, just outside of Orlando, he planned to study business—that is, if his school had a business program. Settling instead on anthropology/archaeology, it was not until Ferruci took



## 🍁 DR. FERRUCI CONT.

an English class that he discovered his interest and talent in writing. With the one-on-one assistance of a professor, he figured out that that was a field he wanted to pursue, and continued on to the State University of New York at Albany (SUNY Albany) for his doctorate in Rhetoric and Composition.

Through stories of his early teaching days, and his experience teaching unfamiliar topics, Ferruci conveyed that following his education, the job itself has been a learning process. There were times where he felt only slightly ahead of his students on the subject matter, he recalled, in addition to addressing that our ever-changing political environment is

"It was not until Ferruci took an English class that he discovered his interest and talent in writing."

something that is often taken into account as a teacher. "One of the great things about rhetoric is that anything is fair game for analysis," the professor noted.

## 🍁 DR. SPEICHER



Sigma Tau Delta's final Faculty Fireside of the fall semester took place on Nov. 1 and showcased Dr. Allison Speicher, professor of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Children's Literature. Speicher began by talking about where she grew up — Queens,

New York. Her family lived in a historic Polish community, surrounded by various ethnic groups that highlighted the integration of immigration within American culture. Something she hates, she said, is that children's literature oftentimes acts like urban childhood does not exist.

In later years, Speicher moved to Long Island to a predominantly white neighborhood, which she called a "culture shock" following the diverse environment she knew in Queens.

As an undergraduate, the professor majored in education and minored in women's studies. During this time, she student taught in the "Academic Village" — a collection of trailers behind an underfunded high school in Richmond, Virginia. It was the most impoverished school in the area

and consisted primarily of African-American students. "I'd never seen anything like this," she said of the single-wide trailer that she taught seniors in. "It sounds like a fictional place. 'Surely people don't go to school in a place like that.' But they did."

Knowing that her students had a heightened awareness of setbacks — from their lack of sufficient resources to their overall socioeconomic disadvantages that existed beyond school — Speicher was determined to find a way to make the class valuable to them. This challenged her to grow as a teacher early on, and learned just as much as the students did. "It was one of the most life-changing things I could've possibly done," Speicher stated.

She recounted one instance that brought her insight: when a student who had an untapped interest in poetry wrote about their thoughts of suicide. Speicher was the first English teacher who the student had liked and trusted enough to build a connection with. Another moment that stood out, she mentioned, was when a student threw their shoe at her out of frustration based on external factors. Times like these emphasized to Speicher that students will always have outside issues that come into play in the classroom, and thus require personalized understanding in any learning environment. "So that was my trailer. A lot of weird things happened there, and a lot of profound things, too," she said.

## DR. SPEICHER CONT.

Speicher also taught while earning her Ph.D. at Indiana University—another foreign social environment; there she instructed themed writing and, eventually, nineteenth-century literature classes. She has been at Eastern for about four years, and appreciates the school’s encouraging atmosphere. “No one here has ever thrown a shoe at me,” she joked. Some of her favorite memories include genuine positive responses to her publications, senior seminars, and exemplary class discussions. Soon, Speicher will be teaching *The Nineteenth-Century American Short Story* for the second time, a course that she designed and looks forward to reprising.

As the Fireside wrapped up, Speicher revealed her shameless love of television. She feels that much of it is actually engaging, not to mention simply

entertaining. Among her favorites are cooking shows like *The Great British Baking Show* and *Good Eats*, as well as other reality programs like *The Bachelor*. On a more serious note, Speicher concluded by providing advice for first-year teachers. She stressed the importance of being sincere, pacing oneself and not entirely neglecting one’s personal life for the sake of a career. “Every lesson’s not going to be the best lesson,” she shared, assuring students that being a good teacher does not happen overnight. “It doesn’t mean you suck.”

***“Being a good teacher does not happen overnight.”***

## SIGMA TAU DELTA’S HARRY POTTER NIGHT

By: Samantha Price

We got to get back to Hogwarts! On Nov. 13, *Harry Potter* fanatics and newbies alike joined together for Sigma Tau Delta’s “Harry Potter Night.” Whether you’ve only seen the movies, have read each book at least four times, or even just wanted a fun event to hang out at, all were welcome.

The night started off with wand making that Olivander himself would be proud of. Guests were invited to craft their very own magical wands from sticks, paint, glitter, jewels and more. Each wand was as unique as the “witch” or “wizard” who made it, with everyone incorporating a little bit of personal touch. After this came a *Harry Potter* trivia game, where guests were able to show off their Wizarding World knowledge. Competition was tough, with Potterheads of all levels dueling off.

While these activities were a castle full of fun, the real highlights were the food and decorations. Dr. Speicher went above and beyond with her *Harry Potter*-themed treats straight from the Leaky Cauldron. From the (almost) authentic



chocolate frogs, to the golden snitches ready to fly off the plate, to the slithering Rice Krispies snake. In addition, guests could channel their inner Severus Snape by creating their own “potions.” There was a wide range of ingredients, such as ice cream, soda, sprinkles, and whipped cream. The decorations rivaled that of the Great Hall, especially the cutouts for the photo booth, which included Potter-style glasses and posters for the Hogwarts Express. Guests could also show off their house pride with cutout ties and scarfs bearing the colors of Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw, and Hufflepuff.

It was not only English majors who attended the event, either. Jacob Dayton, biology major, commented, “I was very impressed with how much effort Sigma Tau Delta and Dr. Speicher put into this night. It felt like I had left Eastern and gotten myself on the Hogwarts Express. I found it magical.” All in all, Harry Potter Night was a tremendous success full of crafts, magic, and plenty of fun, and I look forward to attending again next semester. Expelliarmus!

# Alumni Spotlight: Remembering a Life-Long Learner



By: Adam Phelps

This past July, Willimantic native and Eastern English alumnus Claire Meikle passed away at the age of 91. For those who knew Claire, they remember her as a kind and loving individual who had enormous pride for her hometown.

When I first met Claire, I was volunteering at the Covenant Soup Kitchen. Previously, I had seen her around campus, but didn't really know who she was, or that she was such an idol in town. It wasn't until I started talking to her about Eastern that I found out one of her dreams was to publish her life story. I told her I had been a writing tutor at Eastern. In fact, I had seen her occasionally at the Writing Center. I said I was more than happy to help her edit and synthesize the many pieces of her life in Willimantic into one coherent story. Her memoir, titled "Girl Alone" can be downloaded and read from the Windham Textile Museum website.

If anyone knew Willimantic, it was Claire. In her personal memoir, Claire talks about growing up and maintaining Willimantic residence for almost all 91 years of living. Throughout her life, Claire was an active citizen, from going to school at St. Joseph's, to marching in the Boombox Parades, to working as "Ms. IG" at the Italian Garden Restaurant—something Claire reminisces about in "Girl Alone:"

"There was a time when hundreds of Eastern



Students came to the restaurant at night for beer. There would be 25 students outside the door waiting to come in... A lot of the students called me 'Mrs. IG,' which was short for Italian Garden, and some of them wrote to me after they left."

Claire was known in town for touching the lives of the people around her. She worked with preschool children, for instance, visiting them as the "Cat in the Hat," and was picked as Willimantic's "Cupid" for Romantic Willimantic in 1983 by then-mayor John Lescoe.

Even more interesting, Claire graduated from Eastern Connecticut State University as a senior citizen. At the beginning of her memoir, Claire recounts (in the third person), "She is a student of life, and one reason she still goes to 'college.' Claire is a role model for senior citizens who wanted to go back to school but didn't dare." Claire graduated from Eastern in 1993 with a BA in English, and again in 1997 with a BA in History and a minor in Philosophy. She continued to take classes post-graduation as well.

In her memoir, Claire also discusses pivotal moments in Willimantic history, such as the hurricane of 1938 and "The Frogs of Windham." I have never known anyone as passionate about their hometown as Claire Meikle was about Willimantic. She will be greatly missed.

## Creative Writing in Florence

By: Victoria Randazzo

When considering whether or not I wanted to take ENG 372 — Creative Writing Abroad, I had to consider multiple things: did I want to be away from my summer job for a month, did I want to be away from my parents (and dog) for a month, and was I going to be able to produce a well-enough written story to turn in for a grade? Having not done much creative writing previously, I was intimidated by the thought, but ultimately decided that I didn't want to go through my entire college career without studying abroad, so I signed up.

I was immediately captivated by Florence. I spent my first week there exploring the city, and trying to become familiar with directions. Dr. Torockio showed us how to take the train to other cities, and although it seemed daunting at first, we were all eventually able to do it on our own which led to day/weekend trips to places like Pisa, Venice, and even Rome. As the first week

went on, the reality of having to write a story set in, and we all immediately started looking for inspiration.

Some found inspiration in a cup of coffee while others found it within the walls of the Duomo. Some of us even found inspiration within casual conversations that took place along the historic streets of the city. Most of us would spend hours in the Studio Arts College International (SACI) library, one of the only places where we could think about writing in an air-conditioned setting. Twice a week, we would meet as a class at the



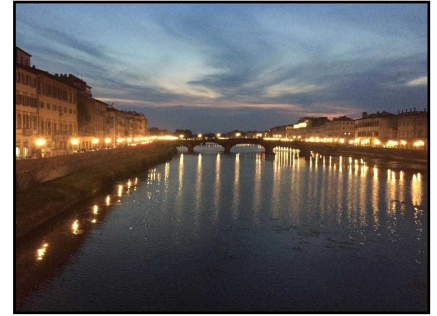


## Creative Writing in Florence Cont.

SACI garden to workshop our stories. Dr. Torockio helped us to better develop skills needed to workshop. As much as we would love to complement each other's work, we all became comfortable with lending criticism that would help strengthen the story as well, in turn helping us to enjoy reading our peers' work.

As the five weeks went on, we all formed a tight bond that was shared over Gusta pizza and humid Florence nights. When the time came for us to pack our bags, it was safe to say most of us weren't ready to leave the lifestyle we had been living for the past

month. However, one positive to returning to the United States was that we could come back saying we had spent a summer being writers in Florence, and that we had another place to call home.



## Dr. Speicher Receives 2017 Award for Scholarship and Artistry

By: Elena Sorrentino



This past June, Dr. Allison Speicher was awarded the Country School Association of America's Award for Scholarship and Artistry for her book, *Schooling Readers*. This is an accolade presented once a year to a work, academic or creative that sheds new light on an aspect of common schooling.

*Schooling Readers* began as an assignment that Speicher had to write for her Ph.D. at Indiana University and evolved into something much more. As an undergrad, Speicher learned about 19th century common schools; however, once she moved onto her graduate studies, she found that nobody ever

**“It is an honor to work with these people. This is their lives.... And I have so much respect for that.”**

mentioned these schools.

She thought this was odd, because the 19th century is cited as the time in which the birth of the public school system began. So, she sought out the stories about school reform that seemed to be missing and found over 130 of them. From there, she broke up the stories into four different categories: school exhibitions, student-teacher romances, violence towards teachers, and students adopted by teachers.

Through working on her dissertation she was introduced to the Country School Association and continued to keep them in mind as she wrote. “They were always a group that I wanted to connect with because they were people who were so interested in this sort of niche topic that I’m really interested in,” Speicher stated. “And I’ve always had it on the back burner that I was going to meet them.”

Following her book’s release, she attended their annual conference in 2016 to present her research, and the group she presented to was unwaveringly receptive. She described them as one of the nicest, and most welcoming, communities that she has ever encountered. She felt as though it broke down the distance between academics and non-academics because it included all people invested in the field, such as historians, librarians, preservationists, teachers etc.

Now, after the experience, Speicher is still in touch with many other people from the conference. She expressed, “I went there the first time, and I didn’t know anyone, but by the time you leave everyone is hugging you goodbye and exchanging phone numbers.”

In fact, she has taken these connections and used them to broaden her own topics of research. For example, one individual runs a one-room school museum in Wisconsin, and she wanted to put on an authentic Christmas program. Specifically, she wanted to find a play that may have been originally performed there, but did not know how or where to find the literature, so she enlisted the help of Dr. Speicher. Today, Speicher is even a co-editor of the association’s annual publication, *The Country School Journal*.

Overall, Speicher feels that the award “is one of the honors that I am truly glad to have won, because it is an honor to work with these people. This is their lives.... And I have so much respect for that.”

# CSU UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH CONFERENCE

By: Chris Morris

On October 13, I attended and presented at the annual Connecticut State University (CSU) English Conference at Central alongside Julia Bonadies, Justin Berak, and Emily Deloge. Julia, Justin, and Emily were presenting papers they had written for Dr. Chirico's English 203 class on Robert Penn Warren's award-winning novel *All the King's Men*, and while none of them had presented at a conference before, you never would have guessed it. Following Dr. Chirico's introduction of the novel, Emily discussed "good political leadership" as defined by the novel, Julia analyzed "the effects of political corruption" on the story's characters, and Justin considered the extent to which the novel and its characters "value sociopolitical contribution."

At previous conferences I have attended, presenters from Eastern have really stood out in terms of the quality, readability, and depth of their research, but this was an especially sophisticated group of papers and scholars. As Julia put it, "It takes a lot of work to prepare for an academic conference, and it really paid off. I think we all felt considerably prepared for something we had never done before, and that speaks a lot to how good of a job Dr. Chirico did guiding us through the process."

Echoing that sentiment, Emily said she learned that "there really isn't anything an English major can't explore, whether it's politics, positionality, or a new novel idea. There are a lot of smart people with really cool ideas out there, and this conference was a good opportunity for everyone to spread that knowledge." And Justin, also looking towards the future and reflecting on himself as a presenter, writer, and researcher, said, "I am very grateful to have attended this event. Through it, I got a glimpse at the inside world of academia and learned more about where my strengths and weaknesses lie."

I couldn't agree more; this conference was my first opportunity to read an excerpt from *Little Children*, the novel I have been writing for almost four years now. Just as Dr. Chirico pushed her panelists to stretch their

intellects and writing skills, Dr. Torockio has, since my sophomore year, been helping me to discover and practice new writing techniques and strategies that have turned creative writing into something I want to spend my life doing. Reading at Central made the idea of writing as a career seem even more exciting, realistic, and achievable than ever before.

Some of this excitement was no doubt due also to the atmosphere of the conference, an atmosphere of intellectual comradery and of shared scholarly passion. I had the pleasure of attending several other excellent presentations, including one by Western student Brodey Ott. Entitled "Truth vs. the Sales Pitch: The Downfall of the Loman Men," Brodey's paper was a close character study of *Death of a Salesman*. Jackie Mayer, meanwhile, a student from Central, presented "From Innocence to Experience in *Frankenstein*," which shed an interesting light on how experience affects, changes, disillusion, and even destroys many of the characters in Mary Shelley's horror classic. Finally, Central's Kathryn Fitzpatrick read from "Aristocrats & Patriarchy: Analyzing John Updike's 'A&P' Through Marxist and Feminist Lenses." An intriguing and strikingly original study of Updike's famous short story from two different theoretical perspectives, Kathryn's paper served to remind us all of how critical it is to view the different schools of literary theory as complementary to one another—rather than as mutually exclusive of one another.

And so just as a final note, I would encourage anyone who is even slightly intrigued by the idea of this conference to apply next fall. It is a tremendous opportunity to share your work, to practice your presentational skills, and to get a taste for what it feels like to be a professional academic. I thus join Julia, Emily, and Justin in thanking the CSUs for putting together such an enlightening and exciting conference.



## DR. DONAGHY DISCUSSES NEW POETRY JOURNAL



Dr. Daniel Donaghy, Professor of English here at Eastern, is the author of five poetry collections, and has also published in numerous journals, including the Paterson Literary Journal. This past September, Donaghy added another accomplishment to his growing body of work by editing and releasing a collaborative poetry journal. The inaugural issue of Here was published recently and includes the work of 18 contributors, both students and poets in the community. This first issue of Here was celebrated with two release readings, during which several of the diverse contributing poets read their work. I recently interviewed Donaghy about Here, and was delighted with his enthusiasm for both the journal itself and sharing the background of the journal.

A firm handshake greeted me as I stepped into Dr. Donaghy's office, and his welcoming demeanor immediately put me at ease as we began to discuss the poetry journal Here, the freshman effort of Donaghy, along with his contributors and team of student editors. The journal was self-designed, and the professor readily shared that the creative process did not come from him alone. Donaghy explained that from "last November until August 11, when the grant [that provided funding for the project] expired," he learned to edit magazines here at Eastern, and worked long hours on copywriting and the layout.

Continuing the theme of community endeavors, he stated that "the writers all took personal attention to the work, painstaking even with their punctuation" as he wanted their feedback on every part of the journal. Donaghy iterated that he wanted each writer to have their own "unique voice," and the contributors were so professional that they took his minimal structural suggestions with grace. Together, they created "story poems" from the 200-something submissions, choosing the poetry that propelled the narrative of the text as a whole. Intrigued, I asked for clarification about the process.

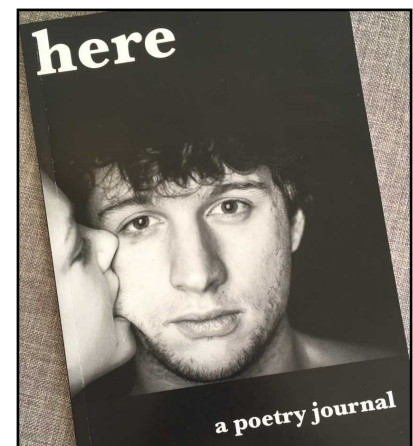
Donaghy explained that since Here was intended as a definitive chronicle, many wonderful poems were left out as they did not fit into the "story of this journal." The chosen works "all create the familiar, they are grounded in life," the professor elucidated. Additionally, he stated, "Each poem is in conversation with the other poems around it," stressing the concept of community effort. He labored over every submission, rejecting "some really awesome work" to fit into the

distinct personality of this first edition. Addressing "community" specifically, Donaghy explained that Eastern student Dierdre Volk took the cover photograph, not only capturing perfectly the "essence of the word 'here' as a whole," but representing the spirit of community he hopes to foster. The entire publication, from grant proposal to finished product, is a stunning example of what can be created by hard work and a shared vision by likeminded and talented individuals.

From there, we discussed his thoughts for the next issue. Succinct as always, Donaghy disclosed that "this magazine creates buzz, energy, and I want to continue that." We again talked about the interconnections between community and voice, and that his ultimate goal is to encourage others to read and share their own stories, "to do something to feel less alone in the world."

By providing our community with a platform from which to share their experiences, we can undoubtedly create meaningful dialog in unexpected places. Donaghy himself grew up with "a lot of community negativity" and realized early on that people need to find their voice despite opposition, which is one reason why he feels proud that Here "is all about life stories that refuse to be ignored." This underlying theme will be continued as the backbone of future issues. He also hopes to include alumni highlights, with opportunities for them to share some of their own poetry.

Donaghy kept the journal purposefully short, a collection that is "not hard to get into, and something you can read over a cup or two of coffee ... let it sink in, and enrich your day." Not only that, but while pondering the narrative created by Here, one can be encouraged to "write and think in new and positive ways," and perhaps even submit their own work for the next issue. Speaking with Dr. Donaghy about Here left me with no doubt about his passion for both the experience and the journal itself; his enthusiasm for the topic was infectious. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Donaghy for achieving his dream of publishing Here, as well as for the community who supported and assisted him in this endeavor.



By: Karen Daniels

## "HERE" POETRY READINGS

### LAUNCH OF THE JOURNAL

Daniel Donaghy, English professor at Eastern Connecticut State University and published author of five poetry collections, has always hoped to launch a national poetry magazine at Eastern. And now, it's here, literally.

"Here" features 18 contributors, and to celebrate its first issue, Donaghy orchestrated two release readings. Speaking to the piece as a whole, he said, "'Here' bears witness to the human experience in all of its sorrows and glories."

In addition to several Eastern students, seven "Here" poets partook in the first reading on Sept. 28, including Harry Humes, Jonathan Andersen, Charles Fort, Kileen Gilory, John Stanizzi, Joan Seliger Sidney and Pegi Deitz Shea. Their poems covered varying facets of their personal lives, incorporating genuine experiences and providing real-world commentary in the process. Many of the writers delivered thoughtful stories to give the audience insight, strengthening the meaning behind each piece. Fort, for instance, revealed something that changed his life forever – the sudden death of his wife.

Fort's wife was a dancer, he explained, and the two of them had always collaborated on artistic pieces, with her choreographing dances to his poetry. She was diagnosed only 40 minutes before the last performance she ever gave. Her absence became a focal point of Fort's writing. "I remember waking up in the night thinking she was next to me," he said, introducing his poem "Pathétique."

Sidney is another writer who draws on details from her life in her writing. She is known for addressing the Holocaust, which her parents survived, and writing about living with multiple sclerosis. At the reading, Sidney talked about her time spent in Grenoble, France, and witnessing a girl named Anne Ruaud, the namesake for one of the poems she chose to read. Sidney told the audience that Ruaud went to school with her children and long suffered as a result of the societal pressure put on women to look a certain way. The poem describes her eating disorder and eventual deterioration.

On the night of the second release reading on Oct. 5, students, poets and poetry lovers alike united once again to commemorate "Here." Contributors in attendance included Sidney, Steve Straight, Fort and Stanizzi. While that evening the same rawness seen the first time around was present, the poets touched more deeply on today's intense social and political climate.

Straight spoke on current affairs, saying, "I think the future of the world really depends on the individual actions of people ... how people treat each other." His poem, "The Future of the World, Part 2: Youth," confronts this idea and the conflicted nature of someone who is unsure whether or not to have faith in society.

Both "Here" readings ultimately emphasized the importance of human connectedness, staying attuned to what is happening in the world and reworking heartfelt emotions into poetry, which have the power to resonate with people on personal levels – as the journal itself does.



Joan Seliger Sidney  
reading from her  
works.

By: Jordan Corey

## IMMERSED IN IMAGERY: ONE STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE AT THE 10/5 "HERE" POETRY JOURNAL RELEASE READING

By: Chi Nguyen

I have never felt so close to language as I did in the moment when I heard poetry for the first time. English is not my native language, so fully comprehending an English lecture or even a casual conversation is often a challenge for me. Poetry has dramatically changed my perception of language. It is not just about how much you understand, but it is also about how you sense and feel it. Poetry, for me, has its own rhythm, music, tone and beat. It has the power to bring people together—connect our thinking, feelings and emotions. This is why I wanted to attend *Here's* release reading, to immerse myself in the poetic atmosphere and share the experience with others.

The journal release was divided into two readings on September 28 and October 5. I have seen a number of poetry readings on social media, but this was the first time I went to one myself. With a feeling of both nervousness and excitement, I went to the second reading, which took place in room 301 of the Science Building. I arrived 10 minutes early, and the room was already crowded, filled with the murmur of people happily talking.

At 7 p.m., the main door was closed, and the student host greeted the audience and introduced the first reader, poet Joan Seliger Sidney. Sidney has published many books of poetry, her poems often reflecting on the Holocaust and the fact that she has severe multiple sclerosis. She gave us a profound insight into her painful but vivid experience with people, about life and about things that we may have never been through. The first poem that she read was titled "Anne Ruaud." It is about one of her children's friends who suffered from anorexia. This could be the most impressive poem I have ever heard. It is brief, but full of imagery and sentiments that are moving and melodic. I still remember two stanzas of her poem that I love most:

"Fifteen,  
Sixteen, seven-  
Teen. Eighteen, nineteen, twen-  
Ty, twenty-one. Anne sees  
Psychologists, psychiatrists.  
No one

Knows where  
To find the key  
To unlock the secret  
That keeps her sleepless.  
She goes from clinic to clinic,

Grenoble,"

I could sense the inner emotion that deepened in her voice, I could hear the beat of my heart harmonizing with the beat of the poem, and I could feel the music of language flowing through my mind. It was exceptional. She then continued with the second poem, "Patricia Grace Vinsonhaler," which is also about a person who endured anorexia. She also stunned the audience by reading poems embedded with mixed feelings, about current political issues and devastating disasters.

The second presenter was Steve Straight. He is an English professor and director of the poetry program at Manchester Community College. His poems are sharp, deceptively simple, and reveal his diverse perspectives on life. He read many poems, but read only one of his two poems that are printed in "Here"—"The Future of the World, Part 2: Youth." He also read "The Flag of Cucumbers," which was from a previous set of his published works.

Next was Charles Fort, who chose not to read his pieces in the journal as he had done previously at the September 28 reading. Instead, he selected pieces from his other works that highlighted his family, specifically his wife and daughters. These poems included "Prose Poem to Claire Fort" and "For 2 Daughters." The other poems he read had more political undertones. One, "All is Not Well" was influenced by Kurt Vonnegut, while the other, "Race War," was inspired by Dante.

**"Poetry, for me, has its own rhythm, music, tone and beat. It has the power to bring people together—connect our thinking, feelings and emotions. This is why I wanted to attend *Here's* release reading..."**

# English Night



By: Jordan Corey

On the evening of Dec. 6, English enthusiasts gathered in the Betty Tipton Room for Eastern Connecticut State University's "English Night," which showcases student excellence in the English Department. Hosted by Chair Barbara Little Liu, who delivered a wholehearted introduction, the event featured the awarding of scholarships, the Sigma Tau Delta induction and three senior seminar presentations.

The Connie Campo Memorial Scholarship is primarily awarded to non-traditional English students, particularly those who both excel in the subject and exhibit passion and sensitivity to issues of gender and diversity, as Campo — a former English Department secretary — did herself. The scholarship recipient at English Night was Yanira Hernandez. Liu highlighted Hernandez's dedication to her studies and undeniable contribution to the department.

Next came the First Year Writing award, bestowed by Dr. Stephen Ferruci, English professor and Coordinator of the First Year Writing Program. This award is given to a student enrolled in College Writing or College Writing Plus whose writing is exceptional for a number of reasons, from its creativity to the research

behind it. Ferruci awarded the Creativity and Innovation award to Christopher Oski, who earned high praise from the professor.

The Sigma Tau Delta induction ceremony was the largest in the Alpha Epsilon Delta chapter's history, with 36 new members joining. Current Chapter President Nadia Ballassone and Vice President Kathryn Jankura welcomed the inductees and led them in recitation of the society's pledge. The ceremony concluded with a round of applause from the audience, many of whom were proud family and friends of the new honor society members.

The products of months' worth of effort, Capstone Seminar projects from Dr. Maureen McDonnell's Liberation Literature course were thoughtful and engaging. Students featured were Jacob St. Jean, Montgomery Kupson and Jason Osman.

St. Jean presented first, sharing his project titled "My Gay America: A Combination of Art and Research; Erasure, Media, and the Queer Experience Following the AIDS Epidemic." He noted that his work was sparked by reflecting on where his knowledge of HIV/AIDS came from growing up. "I realized that a

**"The Sigma Tau Delta induction ceremony was the largest in the Alpha Epsilon Delta chapter's history, with 36 new members joining."**



**New Sigma Inductees**

## English Night Cont.

majority of my knowledge didn't come from school, but mostly from Queer programming, entertainment and media," he said. "Queer people remain to be the outstanding advocates and voices on the issue of HIV/AIDS." St. Jean's project was spotlighted societal, governmental and media reactions to the epidemic from its beginnings in the 1980s through the 90s and beyond. He featured art throughout and also incorporated his original poetry.

With the aim of showing how creative stories can be used to make social commentary, Kupson's presentation centered on her work-in-progress novel, *Sherwood Manor*. The book, set in 1920, follows a group of girls at a British finishing school and draws attention to the enforcement and subsequent defiance of gender roles. "One huge element of our curriculum that became vital to the story's cultivation, as well as my understanding of why liberation is oftentimes needed, is the concept of 'hegemony,'" she said, identifying the hegemonies of her novel as both the school administration and the external patriarchal culture. Engaging in a rebellion against the idea of being a "perfect woman," the protagonist, Gwen Pyre,

raises important social questions regarding liberation and capability.

The final presentation was Osman's insightful analysis revolving around pop culture sensation Beyoncé Knowles widely acclaimed visual album *Lemonade*. Examining the work's cinematography and coinciding music alongside scholarly research revealed an undeniable social awareness and commentary within *Lemonade*. Knowles puts current racial setbacks in the same context as those of the past, consolidating the two to make powerful statements about division and change, or lack thereof. "I began to see Knowles as a social activist and, in some ways, an archaeologist and historian," Osman noted. "I learned that her album had less to do with romance and more to do with the history of Yoruba slaves in America." He discovered that Yoruba history is still very prevalent in our society and must be taken into consideration so that there can be progress toward equality for African-Americans.

Liu again stressed her pride in English students' achievements, closing with a cordial thanks and encouraging attendees to ask those featured about their accomplishments. English Night is twice a year, and will happen again in the spring semester.

# Write the Night

By: Elena Sorrentino

On Monday, Dec. 4, Sigma Tau Delta held their semi-annual "Write the Night" in conjunction with the Writing Center. The event took place on the first floor of the library in the Curriculum Center from 7-11 p.m. Although it was somewhat difficult to find, as the room is hidden at the back of the library, it was worth searching for.

Dr. Speicher went above and beyond with her selection of snacks for people struggling through the stress of final papers. There were brownies, cookies and too many other baked goods to count. If attendees wanted something healthier, she even provided carrots, cheese and crackers. For drinks there was hot chocolate, an undeniably enjoyable drink for this time of year, and juice boxes—because it just wouldn't be a Sigma event without them.

The room was packed with people, and although they all had work in front of them, in many cases it seemed as though not very much work was getting done.

*"People were busy enjoying the company of other students.. all facing the same pressures brought on by finals."*

People were busy enjoying the company of other students, both English majors and non-English majors alike, all facing the same pressures brought on by finals season. Senior and Communications major Brooke Cochrane stated, "It's fun to go to events like this where we have a designated spot to do our work. It makes me feel more proactive." Everyone appeared to take the event as a nice break. Other students filtered in and out throughout the night, picking up snacks or a drink before heading back into the library to work.

Overall, it was an enjoyable way to end the semester and a welcomed gathering for all students who sought refuge from their familiar work spaces.

## NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

**Samantha Carmen** is a senior majoring in English.

**Brooke Cochrane** is a senior majoring in Communication, with a minor in Writing.

**Jordan Corey** is a junior majoring in English, with a minor in Women's Studies.

**Karen Daniels** is a senior majoring in English.

**Shelby Eccleston** is a junior majoring in Communication, with a minor in Writing.

**Jessica Maloney** is a senior majoring in English.

**Chris Morris** is a senior majoring in English and History, with a minor in Writing.

**Chi Nguyen** is a freshman majoring in English.

**Adam Phelps** received his degree in English and Communication, with a minor in Writing in 2013.

**Samantha Price** is a junior majoring in English and Art, with a minor in Photography.

**Victoria Randazzo** is a senior majoring in English, with a minor in Writing.

**Elena Sorrentino** is a junior majoring in English and New Media, and a minor in Writing.

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## SEEKING EDITOR AND SOCIAL MEDIA INTERN!

English lovers, writers, and social media enthusiasts alike: consider a Social Media and Editing Internship with the department! If you are a current student interested in this internship opportunity for the Spring 2018 semester, please contact Dr. Liu at:

liub@easternct.edu



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