

KEEP-ENG IN TOUCH

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

A message from the chair



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

I'm happy to introduce the Spring 2018 edition of *Keep-ENG in Touch*. Thanks to the efforts of editor Angelica Reilly, as well as a number of talented student writers, it's an engaging look at what has been going on in our department since January.

It has been a busy and exciting time, full of faculty awards and publications, student scholarship, visiting writers, and alumni panels. Angelica had to work extra hard making sure everything got covered, and since she was working alone, her dedication is greatly appreciated. If you see her, please congratulate her and commend her efforts.

Finally, to current students: as always, we need someone (preferably two students) to edit the Fall 2018 edition of this newsletter and oversee our social media presence. It's a job that requires good time management, solid people skills, and—of course—the ability to edit effectively. If you would like to pursue this opportunity and earn credits for ENG 495 Internship in Writing and Editing, please send me an email. I'll get back to you with more information.

Whether you'll be working or playing (or a combination of both), I wish you an enjoyable summer.

Dr. Barbara Little Liu
liub@easternct.edu



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A message from the editor

I'm proud to present the Spring 2018 version of *Keep-ENG in Touch*! I have worked extremely hard over the last semester to bring this to life, and I'm very proud of what I have managed to accomplish. It wasn't easy, but it was well worth the reward. I hope everyone enjoys reading it as much as I enjoyed putting it together!

Sincerely,
Angelica Reilly
reillyan@my.easternct.edu

Alumni panels

ENGLISH AT WORK: ATTORNEY PANEL

by Jordan Corey



As part of its “English at Work” series, the English Department hosted a panel of Eastern alumni who attended law school after receiving their English degrees. The event, which took place on February 26th, combatted the popular notion that the English major offers few career options outside of academia.

The panel consisted of Kristen Brierley ('08), Samuel Lisi ('13), and Andrew Minikowski ('12). Moderated by current English majors Nadia Balassone and Ricardo Alavez-Viveros, the three discussed their transition from studying English to studying law and onward, sharing real-life professional experiences and providing helpful insight for current English majors.

Brierley earned her Juris Doctor (J.D.) in 2013 from Western New England University School of Law, serving as Editor-in-Chief of the Western New England Law Review. She works as a Labor Relations Specialist with the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. She participates in grievance hearings and arbitrations, facilitates collective bargaining negotiations of state employee union contracts, conducts legal research and writes memoranda. “I hear everything,” said Brierley, from the seemingly small issues to major negotiations. “There’s no shortage of grievances.” Highlighting the job availability for someone with her set of qualifications, she stated that she feels there is a significant demand for labor law.

Lisi received both his J.D. and Latin Legum Magis-

ter and Master of Laws in Intellectual Property and Information Governance from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 2016. He works for the Beazley Group as Wordings Counsel specializing in cybersecurity. As Technology, Media and Business Product Manager, he leads the innovation and design of technology media initiatives globally. On taking a more non-traditional route after law school, Lisi commented, “I saw value in the skills you take from law school,” much like utilizing skills gained as an English major in other spaces.

“You can do whatever you want with a JD ... it’s applicable almost universally.”

Minikowski earned his J.D. and Master of Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School in 2015, where he was the Editor-in-Chief of the Vermont Journal of Environmental Law and an intern with the New York Office of the Attorney General. He will soon fill a position at the Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel, an independent agency within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. “There’s a bit more opportunity to mediate right now,” he revealed, due to the current political and environmental climate. He recognized the strength in having a voice in this sense, emphasizing the significance of the English major’s ability to make powerful statements.

When asked about which English classes they consider to be particularly helpful when applied to studying law, the panel agreed on the importance of rhetoric and composition classes. “That’s what



Kristen Brierley.

law is ... that's the meat of practicing law," said Minikowski, calling attention to the importance of being able to structure evidence and form coherent arguments. Lisi pointed out that it is beneficial for the English student to actively participate in these classes as a means of refining discourse skills. "You need to be able to speak in a way that's clear and makes sense," he noted.

Though impressive grades undoubtedly serve a purpose, Brierley advised students to place some focus on exploring a range of courses at Eastern in order to expand their overall knowledge. "I think more so than GPA is having a well-rounded background," she said. "It shows who you are as an individual." The panel then touched on the significance of networking, of applying one's abilities to various aspects of the professional world.

In the same way, studying both English and law showcases versatile character, an array of connections brings widespread career possibilities. Lisi mentioned the benefits of interning and becoming familiar with companies that pertain to one's field, even if not in an expected position, as a means of "learning by-proxy." The alumni collectively stressed the magnitude of this multifaceted effort. "Be strategic in looking for places you'd want to gain some exposure," said Minikowski.

As a law student, "You have to have balance," said Lisi. It is no secret that the English major also requires remarkable balance. The dedication behind the field and those in it is a sweeping part of what shapes a student to succeed in a demanding discipline later in life. "In hindsight, law school is like training for anything. It's very difficult because it's worth it."

"Of course there are moments where you're in over your head," said Brierley, reassuring students that every professional journey comes with challenges — especially in the field of law — and that struggling does not make somebody a failure. Rather, she suggested, one must learn what methods work best for them and put in consistent effort. "It is not what you expect, it is not like undergrad, but you know yourself."

Despite the strain that comes with the study, Minikowski encouraged, "You just have to go at it." Affirming the English major's welcomed role in the field of law, he addressed the fact that it is a domain where a diverse group of undergraduate students come together. "What's interesting about law school is that it doesn't really matter," said Minikowski. "You just have to have the drive to work on it ... it's more of a personal challenge."

A TALE OF MANY LIBRARIES: EASTERN AT WORK

by Jordan Corey

Continuing its "English at Work" series, which highlights the versatile nature of an English degree, the department hosted a panel of alumni who each obtained their Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) after completing the English major at Eastern. The March 26 event was moderated by senior English major Kyle Randall and welcomed Hilary Saxton '13, Caroline Hayden '13, and Eric Alan '12, who spoke on their differing career paths that stemmed from studying English, and how the field works in support of their professional choices.

Saxton earned her MLIS in 2014 from Simmons College, during which time she also worked in the

Wheelock College Library and in a special collections library for the non-profit organization Facing History and Ourselves. She is now a children's librarian at the main branch of the Cambridge Public Library in Cambridge, MA.

"I just read stories and sing," Saxton joked. In reality, she runs and plans programs, reviews and purchases a portion of the book collection, is engaged in outreach with public schools, and advises readers of all ages. The communication skills — awareness of audience, heightened message reception, effective use of language — that come with an English degree have undoubtedly served Saxton in un-

expected ways. “I never even thought I wanted to work with kids, but now I can’t imagine my life without it,” she added.

Hayden received her MLIS from the University of Maryland iSchool in 2016. Focusing on archives and digital curation, she has previously worked at National Public Radio, the University of Baltimore and the Chevy Chase Historical Society. Currently, she is Digital Services Manager at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA.

Hayden’s responsibilities include taking care of the department budget, working with outside departments to get grant funding and documenting records online. “There are so many hidden gems in the archives,” she said, adding that seeing the final product of her work is one of the best things about her job. Utilizing the advanced literacy that she developed as an English major in combination with her MLIS knowledge, she can make significant pieces of history more accessible to the general public. “Anyone can go see it.”

Alan earned his MLIS from San Jose State University in 2014, during which time he was the Night Circulation Technician at the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London. Now, he is the high school librarian at Franklin Academy High School in Malone, NY. Interacting with more than 400 students daily, Alan informed attendees that, contrary to popular belief, he does not do “a lot of book stuff.” He assists with homework, answers reference questions, helps students through the college application process and works closely with technology.

“At a high school, there’s no such thing as a typical day,” he stated. While Alan originally wanted to be

a professor, he noted that he “fell in love” with the Eastern library as an undergraduate, an experience largely attributed to the literary exploration done by an English student. His relationship with books quickly became a pathway to unexpected self-discovery, and to career placement. “We’re curators of information,” he said of librarians.

All three panel members stressed the flexibility of their MLIS degrees, promoting the field as a promising space for the adaptable English student. Much like an English degree, a library degree does not inherently land somebody in academia. “It’s not just universities, it’s not just historical societies,” said Hayden. “We all go into the program, come out and go off in a million different directions.” Some of these directions include positions

in computer coding or research, or for organizations like landscape architecture firms, law offices, or large corporations like Coca-Cola.

Alan concurred, pointing out that many people do not have a distinct plan going into this graduate study. “The great thing about a library degree is that you can do practically anything with it.” He added that the English major’s polished ability to

structure, gather and organize information makes for a smooth transition into Library and Information Science.

The alumni also emphasized that finding the right fit career-wise is an individualized process, which is why it is essential to consider a number of options. Hayden shared that before English, she had majored in Art, and before that, Psychology. “I needed to reevaluate my career choices,” she stated. She found value in her on-campus job, working in the archives at Eastern’s library.



Hilary Saxton, Eric Alan, and Caroline Hayden

Photo courtesy of University relations

Saxton, on the other hand, knew that she loved English, but did not know for sure what to do with her degree after graduation. She revealed that her decision to get an MLIS was because a friend, who was also applying to library school, suggested that she look into it, and it turned out that she quickly took to the study. However, Saxton didn't discover her love of being a children's librarian until after she realized that she hated being a college librarian .

The panelists' varied experiences called attention to not only the professional growth that comes with Library and Information Science but to the academic development undergone by an English student that contributes to it. Alan affirmed that the overall practicality of the English major is a compelling quality in the working world, whether directed toward an MLIS or elsewhere. "You will be able to take that and use it," he encouraged.



Visiting Authors

POET MARIA MAZZIOTTI GILLAN COMES TO EASTERN

by Samantha Carman



Maria Mazziotti Gillan (center) with ECSU student poets

On Thursday, April 5, in Science 301 at 7 pm Eastern Connecticut State University hosted poet Maria Mazziotti Gillan to read her poetry. Born in Paterson, New Jersey, Gillan was the child of Italian immigrants. During her career, she has published 22 books including *Paterson Light and Shadow* and *What Blooms in Winter*. She is also the director of the Creative Writing program and a professor at Binghamton University.

The small audience consisted of both students and faculty members, all of whom listened to every word she had to say. The unique thing about Gillan's poetry is that instead of focusing on rhyme and meter, she focuses on the stories that are im-

portant to her. She told stories of growing up in Paterson, New Jersey, and about the friends she made there.

Many of her poems focused on her family as well. One of the most memorable poems of the evening talked about the guilt that she felt about the way that she treated her

father when she was seventeen. She told us that she hadn't written that particular poem until she was in her 50s, which shows that it's never too late to tell your story; if it's important to you, when the time is right, you will write it.

When Gillan was done reading her poems, she spoke to audience members and gave them advice on finding the ability to tell their own stories. Something that she mentioned was ignoring the "crow on your shoulder." The crow is that little voice inside your head that says you can't do something. Maria assured everyone that they absolutely could. During the moments you're stuck, or you're not sure where your poem is going, let

the little old lady take over. She encourages to write with your heart instead of your brain, and by doing that you will find the ability to tell your stories in the same way that Maria has. The audience seemed very moved by her advice, and one student who was in attendance that night, Brooke Cochran, said, "I've never written poetry before, but after this, I think I want to try."



*Maria Mazziotti
Gillan*

✿ SCOTTISH BARD ANDREW CALHOUN VISITS

by Monti Kupson

On the 30th of April, folk-singer Andrew Calhoun performed Gaelic ballads in the Student Center Theater. Hugh Blumenthal, a former Eastern English professor, and Dr. McNeil hosted Calhoun's visit.

Folk music has enthralled Calhoun since his schooldays in Chicago. He would often skip school to see revivalist singers like John Prine, who would revamp old Gaelic ballads into more accessible, popular forms. Calhoun has himself been writing songs since the 1970s and enjoys any genre of music that "touches the soul." Despite growing up with these songs, a similar soulfulness is what drew him into the ballads. "There's a certain frankness about them," he explains, "and it's really beautiful."

His more academic examination and collation of Gaelic music began after he discovered Dr. Francis Childs' anthology of Anglo-Scottish folk ballads. Calhoun sang several songs from this collection, including "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight," "The Twa Sisters," and "Twa Corbies." Many Gaelic ballads center around themes of love, family, tragedy,

and nature. Calhoun also notes that many ballads feature a tragedy as a result of "a man not listening to the women in his life." Since ballads were usually passed down through oral tradition by the matriarchs of the family, he sees these tragic ballads as cautionary tales

The following day, Calhoun visited Dr. McNeil's Scottish Literature and Culture course. He sang ballads by Robert Burns, the official Bard of Scotland, including "My Luve's Like a Red, Rose Rose" and "Man Was Made to Mourn." Considering the class had read some of Burns' poetry on their own, he also used this visit to teach more biographical information about the iconic Bard.

Calhoun's discography includes "Telfer's Cows: Folk Ballads of Scotland," and his newest release is called "Rhymer's Tower: Ballads of the Anglo-Scottish Border," a work that was five years in the making. The record is available on Amazon or at Waterbug.com, the website of Calhoun's record label.



CT Poets Laureate Readings

by Samantha Carman

Eastern professor Daniel Donaghy is also Windham, Connecticut's first poet laureate, and as part of his efforts in that role, he organized two poetry readings on Eastern's campus this semester.

The first, on Tuesday, February 27th, was a gathering of local poets called "Here in Windham." Fifteen different poets from the Windham area came to read their work. Some of the readings were by Eastern professors—including Dr. Raouf Mama, Dr. Edmond Chibeau, and Dr. Donaghy himself.

There were so many people in the audience that some listeners had to sit on the floor. It was incredible to see just how many people came to support and hear the creativity our community has to offer.

The topics of the poems varied, but they all had one thing in common—anyone who was reading was telling a story that was important to them. If the subject of the poem didn't give that away, the way they spoke did.

One of the crowd favorites included a poem about WWE wrestling read by John Wetmore, a teacher at the ACT performing arts high school located in Willimantic. Another favorite was a poem about an awkward encounter on public transportation with a "hot dude" by Eastern professor Edmund Chibeau. The individual authors read their poems with such high energy that it seemed every single person in the crowd was able to feel precisely what the speaker wanted them to.

The second reading was held on Tuesday, April 10th, when ten out of Connecticut's twenty-two poets laureate gathered to read their work as well as work written by previous poets laureate. That night's reading was given in memory of Hugo DeSaro, Poet Laureate of East Hampton, and Dick Allen, who was Connecticut's previous Poet Laureate.

A memorable poet of the evening was Julia Morris who is the Poet Laureate of Manchester. Before reading, she told the audience that her poems were about a dark topic that people needed to talk about—the battle with drug addiction. By sharing her poem, she hopes to "break the stigma we have around addiction." Her poem "Sliver, Flicker, Spark, Glimmer," about her son's early recovery from addiction, was perhaps the most personal poem that was read.

Eastern's own Daniel Donaghy was also among those who read that evening, sharing three poems that all related to work. Of those he read, his most memorable poem, titled "What I did While Wayne Called the Cop," was about a shoplifting incident he witnessed while working at a Rite-Aid in the Kensington area of Philadelphia.

Some of the other poets laureate present at the reading were Rhonda Ward of New London and Allan Garry who is the Poet Laureate for the Veterans Art Foundation.

Many of the poems read dealt with praise. Whether it was praise for another person that the speaker knew or appreciation for a person they had seen, the admiration was still present.

Throughout the night audience members listened carefully to the poet's words. The room was quiet during heavy and more serious poems and laughed during ones that were more light-hearted. Clearly, this was an engaging collection of readings.



Rhonda Ward, Poet Laureate of New London.

Photo courtesy of University Relations.

Student Presentations

✿ MY EXPERIENCE AT THE 39TH ANNUAL MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE FORUM AT KEENE COLLEGE IN KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

by Karl Roberts

I had a spectacular time attending the 39th Annual Medieval and Renaissance Forum, and I am grateful to ECSU for providing me with the opportunity to do so. It was the first scholarly conference I have ever attended, and I was thoroughly impressed with the sheer amount of knowledge that people have. During the several panels that I attended, which included topics like medieval text and image, medieval Scandinavia, and image and community, I was overwhelmed by the detail and scope of the presentations. One presentation that I remember specifically was titled “Finding the Thread: The Life and Afterlife of a Lost Medieval Tapestry” by Meredith Fluke, who works at the Davis Museum at Wellesley College. Her presentation was about how she found a large portion of a forgotten tapestry from the middle ages in the basement of a dormitory. The tapestry was of a vicious battle, with Theseus in the center, and was in reasonably good condition. She then showed us how she tracked down the bigger portion of the tapestry in some far-off country’s museum and fit the piece she found into it like a puzzle piece. I honestly felt like I was watching “National Treasure” and Meredith Fluke was Nick Cage solving an ancient medieval mystery. It was probably the most interesting presentation I’ve ever seen, and I was amazed that I presented at the same conference.

My presentation, while it didn’t involve solving medieval mysteries, went rather well even though I was a bit nervous. I was on one of the first panels of the conference, which was titled Architecture and Landscape in the Middle Ages, and we had a pretty good crowd. My two co-panelists were Whitney Kite of Tufts University and Geneviève

Pigeon, who came all the way from Université du Québec à Montréal. I was the first to present my paper, “Journey to the Center of the Earth: Eco-Terrorism, Anthropocentric Mindsets, and Animals in The Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald,” which is about St. Willibald, an 8th century Roman Catholic bishop who is considered the most traveled Anglo-Saxon of his time. Now, before I get hunted down for calling a Saint an eco-terrorist, let me explain. My paper is about how St. Willibald interacted with the environment as he traveled across Europe and Asia. Sometimes he did some questionable things that, let’s say, modern-day environmentalists would not appreciate. People seemed to enjoy my presentation, and I enjoyed presenting it very much. After the presentations of my co-panelists, there was a twenty-minute session for questions. I was glad that I presented first because I could relax for the rest of the conference and focus on other presentations.

I cannot express the extent of my satisfaction after attending this conference. In any case, I am incredibly grateful to Eastern Connecticut State University, and especially Dr. Meredith Clermont-Ferrand of the English department, for giving me the opportunity to attend and present my ideas in Keene.



A statue of St. Willibald



SENIOR NICOLE GREEN'S RESEARCH PUBLISHED IN ACADEMIC JOURNAL

by Angelica Reilly

Nicole Green, a senior majoring in education and English, is one of the few students to be published in an academic journal as an undergraduate. Her honors thesis, titled "Beyond the 'MotherTeacher: How Teaching Became Women's Work," goes into detail about the increased number of women that entered the teaching force in the nineteenth century, and was published in the most recent issue of *Country School Journal*. Her work looks at how women were conditioned to view their role in the classroom not as one of authority, "but rather as expressions of their caring personalities." Instead of focusing on the outside forces that tried to influence women educators, Nicole instead put her efforts into exploring the views of the teachers themselves, bringing a unique insiders' perspective to light and, in turn, challenging the "centrality of the 'mother-teacher' model in order to better understand the labor of women teachers."

Between writing and publishing this paper, Nicole and her mentor, Dr. Speicher, worked together for two years. After working tirelessly to get it ready to be presented for her senior honors thesis, Dr. Speicher told Nicole about *Country School Journal*, for which she is co-editor, and encouraged her to submit it for review. The other editor loved it as

much as Dr. Speicher and Nicole did, and the journal published it in October of 2017

When asked what inspired her to pick this topic, Nicole stated that "teaching is an underappreciated career, even in the realm of higher academia." In an attempt to understand why this is, she delved deeper into the history of the education career and found that it is primarily a woman's career because of the maternal qualities attributed to teaching. In doing her research, Nicole changed the way she looks at teaching. As a student-teacher for third graders, it made her change the way she regards the occupation. Instead of referring to the children she works with as her "kids," she refers to them now as her "students"—which is what they are, and the former shouldn't be forced on any woman in the career path.

Moving forward, Nicole hopes that her findings will force people to start listening more to teachers and valuing the voice of those educating. She will be furthering her own education at the University of Florida in a Ph.D. program focusing on 19th century American literature, gender studies, and children studies.



ENGLISH MAJORS AMONG EASTERN STUDENTS PRESENTING AT NCUR CONFERENCE

by Chris Morris

From April 4-7, 2018, I attended and presented at the annual National Conference on Undergraduate Research. This year, Eastern sent over two dozen students from various disciplines to the University of Central Oklahoma to exhibit their research at this prestigious event, and not one of them disappointed. English students had a partic-

ularly strong showing, as Nicole Green and Lindsay Pattavina presented their senior honors theses: "Beyond the Mother-Teacher: How Teaching Became Women's Work" and "Picture This: African American Cultural Representation in Children's Literature." Both presentations left crowds impressed and inspired slews of provocative ques-

tions during their respective Q&A sessions. My presentation of my honors thesis, “Juvenilism: A New Theoretical Perspective on the Origins and Mechanics of Contemporary Literary Portrayals of Children,” encouraged a discussion of various literary portrayals of youth in popular culture. The presentation left me with the sense of validation that any undergraduate student researcher hopes to find when presenting their research to their peers.



Group photo taken at the NCUR Conference.

Provided by Chris Morris.

Joined by Dr. Carlos Escoto from the Department of Psychology and Dr. Patricia Szczys from the Department of Biology, 2018’s Eastern NCUR participants discussed “the rhetoric of U.S. foreign aid to Palestine,” “media influences on mental illness stigma,” “the effect of campus alcohol policies and stress on college binge drinking,” and “physiological measures of empathy pain implicating mirror neuron activity and gender differences in self-reported empathy.” Some students, like Ashely Shumbo, even participated in the visual arts exhibit, while Hannah Nilsson, Joshua Perry, Noah Lerch, and Antonia Reynolds stirred early Saturday morning crowds with a spectacular musical presen-

tation of Korean Samul Nori. Julia Underhill presented “Women, Strikes, and the Early Labor Movement: An Exploration of Union Strategy 1870-1910,” while Elizabeth Hilton discussed “sleep hygiene, psychological distress, and acceptability of sleep hygiene practices in college students.”

Between wowing students and faculty from universities around the nation and attending equally compelling presentations by other universities’ students, NCUR participants also had the opportunity to network with potential graduate schools during the grad school fair. Various universities with an array of graduate program offerings from the University of Chicago at Illinois to the University of Iowa offered application fee waivers and provided conference attendees with graduate program directors’ contact information. Taking place at the University of Central Oklahoma’s gorgeous Wellness Center, the grad fair was one of the conference’s biggest highlights and most popular attractions.

That would, of course, be second to the conference’s famous plenary speakers: SONIC President Claudia San Pedro; wildly influential politician and activist T.W. Shannon; United Nations representative Ramu Damodaran; and, perhaps most famously, NBA star, bestselling author, and activist Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Filling an entire gymnasium with ecstatic fans, Abdul-Jabbar discussed the roots of his “Give Kids a Shot that Can’t be Blocked” campaign, which brings educational STEM opportunities to underserved communities, and talked with the enormous crowd about one of his most recent writing projects: an action-mystery series entitled Mycroft Holmes. He discussed the status of race relations in contemporary America and, of course, answered student questions about his exciting NBA career. It was a lively presentation to say the least.

By the time we headed back to the airport early

Saturday afternoon, we were physically worn out, intellectually exhausted, and yet not entirely ready to go home. I know that, at least for me, this was the first conference of such an enormous scale that I had ever attended during my time at Eastern. No matter how overwhelming it might have been at times, no aspiring scholar can put a price on the

opportunity to hear from students around the nation on all manner of disciplines. Anyone considering a conference venue to present at next year should consider NCUR, which will be held at Kennesaw State University in Georgia. Trust me: you won't regret making the journey.



LATINX RHETORS IN PROFILE

by Morgan LaFlamme

Eastern Connecticut State University's presence in the research community continues to thrive as students traveled to New Haven to attend an academic conference on April 20th.

Students from Dr. Christine Garcia's Chicana and Latinx Rhetoric course were invited to present their research at an Undergraduate Symposium held by Yale University's Ethnicity, Race, and Migration Studies department. Throughout the course of the semester, the focus of the class ranged from the history of the Mexican American community and their activism to prominent voices from the Latinx community. The students' research culminated in a Latinx rhetor or activist profile, in which each student used a creative approach to discuss the influence and achievements of a person of their choice. For the symposium, the students opted to reconfigure their projects into flash profiles about each rhetor, accompanied by student-produced visuals. The end result took the form of a spoken word project, which mirrors the creativity that is fostered by Eastern's liberal arts mission. Participating in the symposium presentation were Nadia Balassone, Keara Berisso, Natalie Criniti, Vania Galicia, Jesse Kuter, Amanda Moundraty, Bria Prentice, Victoria Randazzo, Elena Sorrentino, Sara Terry, and Zachary Troiano.

At the symposium, the ECSU students presented a comprehensive overview of many distinguished and passionate activists from the Latinx community. The panel began with the work of Chicana artists, including Patssi Valdez and Carmen Lomas

Garza, focusing on the influence of the Chicana experience. This emphasis on Chicana feminism was continued in a discussion of Elizabeth Betita Martinez, an author and community organizer. Numerous students found it meaningful to discuss those rhetors whose strong Latinx voices were taken from them, such as Chicano newsman Ruben Salazar, Brazilian poor-people's activist Marielle Franco, and Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceras. Some students even chose to spotlight the combined efforts of different activists, like the partnership between Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez to establish the United Farm Workers Union.

The conclusion of the panel aligned Latinx history to current activist issues in the United States as Paulo Crisostomo of the East L.A. Walkouts (Chicano Blowouts) in 1968 was discussed alongside Emma Gonzales, organizer and activist for March For Our Lives. This comparison served as a powerful reminder of the strength that lies in activism and community solidarity. The ECSU student panel emphasized the importance of the Latinx voice in U.S. culture and brought attention to the achievements of the community. Similarly, the experience provided an opportunity for the students to demonstrate the successes that come when you combine research and social responsibility, which is reflective of the Liberal Arts curriculum. As Chicana activist Dolores Huerta says, "Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world."



AN INTERVIEW WITH MATT BESSETTE: ENGLISH MAJOR, THEATRE MAJOR, AND DIRECTOR

by Kaitlyn Dirga

The student-directed showcase *Awakenings* this spring semester featured two one-act plays directed by two students, Emily John and English Major Matt Bessette. Bessette's play *Youth*, written by Thornton Wilder, told the story of a 46-year-old man who is shipwrecked on an island where people are killed once they hit the age of thirty. This play was presented in a comedic way to show the immaturity that comes along with being an adolescent or young adult. Both shows were received with generally approving vibes, with audiences reacting well to the jokes that came up in *Youth* and laughing along with the show. There were even multiple standing ovations!

I interviewed Matt to learn more about his experience directing this play.

Q: Why did you decide to use Thornton Wilder's *Youth*?

A: Thornton Wilder's *Youth* is unique. It stood out to me because it's not very well-known, and its thematic presence is so strong, and yet it is so cleverly written that it comes across as nothing more than a meaningless farce to the unobservant viewer. I interpret it as a drama deliberately masquerading as a comedy to hide its more serious intentions. In a sentence, it is remarkable because it effortlessly blends humor and horror.

Q: Did you feel as if you were prepared to direct the play?

A: Yes, any theatre student who wishes to direct a main-stage show for their senior capstone project must fulfill what the department calls the Pathways to Leadership (a series of classes and responsibilities separate from the theatre core which serve as prerequisites for the capstone). These pathways primarily ensure everyone is ready. Some of the courses include stage management and producing and directing; and the responsibilities include being a backstage ninja for a show, assistant stage

managing (ASM) a show, and assistant directing a show. My pathway was a bit unique; I worked backstage and ASMed, but because there was no opportunity to assistant direct, I was instead given the duty of being production manager of the black box and proscenium theaters for the 2017-2018 academic year. That means I oversee the use of the space for student productions and update a calendar of events whenever somebody books the spaces. It is because of these additional responsibilities that I was deemed qualified to direct a main-stage show as part of the student-directed showcase.

Q: How did these classes and jobs prepare you for directing the show?

A: A director supervises actors, technicians, designers, and stage managers, so it stands to reason that they must know how to do all those things to manage all these people properly. The aforementioned classes and jobs train future directors in all areas of theatre because a person needs to know about all areas of theatre to be a good director.

Q: What difficulties did you have directing the play?

A: Initially, the only significant problems were scheduling conflicts; at the time we auditioned and cast the shows, four productions were occurring simultaneously. One of my actors, Austin Washington, was cast in all four; it was quite difficult, therefore, to find the time for him to be in all four pieces equally. Later on, we had to recast the leading role because the initial actor could no longer fulfill the role for personal reasons, and this took place about three weeks before the play. Finding a new Gulliver, teaching him his lines, blocking, and everything was no easy task, and Jim York—the man who swooped in and saved the day—was barely able to memorize and do all the necessary character work before the show opened.

Q: Is there anything you would do differently after seeing the play?

A: Nothing major, surprisingly. The only things I would change are minor blocking fixes and some technical polish. I would choose to have certain actors, for example, be positioned more upstage during certain moments because I didn't account for the playing space to be as limited as it was due to audience members taking up space for those sitting behind. On the technical side of things, I would have tweaked some of the sound and lighting cues if I had more time, but that doesn't mean much because *every* director in the theatre world wishes they had more time. A lot of directors, in fact, don't consider the production to be finished even as it's going through its runs.

Q: Lastly, what are you most proud of about this piece?

A: I'd say I'm most proud of the way I handled myself as a director—and this speaks to more of the *process* than the *product*. I believe I exceeded expectations regarding student directing in the areas of communication, efficiency, and professionalism. I gave my actors an anonymous survey at the end of the rehearsal process in which I asked them specific questions about my performance. All of them said they'd be willing to work with me again as one of my actors, and out of ten, all of them gave me a seven or higher. I've always been particularly proud of my communication and leadership skills, and this production was the perfect opportunity to demonstrate these skills in an educational environment.



Professor Readings

✿ REFUGEEED: A BOOK READING AND INTERVIEW WITH REGINALD FLOOD

by Angelica Reilly

Reginald Flood, a highly revered professor at Eastern, has recently published his second poetry book in what will soon be a trilogy of collections. His most recent publication is titled *Refugeed* and it features poems that took about two years of research, three years of writing, and immeasurable dedication to put together and get ready to be received by the world.

The reception on campus was phenomenal. His reading took place at 7:00pm on Wednesday, April 25, in the library's Johnson Room, and it was packed. Students were



standing in the back of the room to get the chance to hear Dr. Flood read his poems, and not one person was disappointed. He started with a few poems from the first book he published—*Coffle*—then moved into *Refugeed*. He even gave us a glimpse of his third book in progress and read poems of a more personal nature, one specifically focusing on the hate crime murder of a loved one.

The final poem read at the reading was the most powerful. Titled "Traffic Stop," the poem

explores Flood's feelings about his daughter getting pulled over in a rich, white town in Connecticut and saying, "how can I help you hon?" to the cop that pulled her over. It is powerful, and hearing him read it out loud made it even more so. You could really feel the fear he felt towards the situation, and there were very few dry eyes in the house.

His inspiration for this current project was discovering his own family roots. The first poem he read was about the myth in his family about how his relatives escaped from slave Georgia to slightly less enslaved Arkansas and started the family farm, which they still have today. He acquired a thousand slave narratives from people that lived in the area to write his poems, and that was the hardest part. Reading what people went through at the time is emotionally brutal, and it took its toll on Dr. Flood, which you can really feel in the poems.

As of right now, he's enjoyed all of the multitude of readings he has given, but his favorite has been at NYU in the William Vernon house. It was the first one he gave, and it was packed full of students. He was honored to give a reading at such a historic place. This summer, he intends to do readings in the area of Arkansas he focused in the poems, which will likely end up being his favorite.

As mentioned before, Dr. Flood is currently working on the publication of his third collection of poems, as well as a full play as opposed to the one-act plays he'd been used to prior. If his writing moving forward is anything like the writing he read on campus, everyone that comes in contact with it will be in for a real treat.



PROFESSOR DONAGHY SHARES HIS LATEST BOOK OF POETRY

by Joyce Figueroa

Eastern's own Daniel Donaghy, professor of English and Windham county's first poet laureate, has released the final poetry book in an ongoing trilogy; this book is titled *Somerset*. Through an interview and reading of his book on April 26th, 2018, Donaghy shared his insights on the topics that he tackles in this latest work.

Like the other books in the trilogy, *Somerset* follows Donaghy's experiences growing up in Kensington, an inner-city neighborhood in Philadelphia. *Somerset* is an elegy to that place. Donaghy explained that this book shows how the issues concerning chronic problems with drugs, prostitution, violence and racial issues, have been present for a long time. However, some have developed and worsened over the years. The other two books in

the collection, *Start with the Trouble* (U of Arkansas Press, 2009) and *Streetfighting* (BkMk Press/U Missouri-Kansas City, 2005) touch on the evolution of these problems. However, Donaghy feels that this third installment is "almost like saying goodbye to the place [he] grew up in." In doing this, he manages to give voice to the problems that he recognizes from his past and present experiences.

Donaghy goes on to explain how this book is a combination of memories and events that occurred throughout his childhood, along with research regarding the "historical decline of the place, without losing touch with the personalities of the people and heart that built this place." He asserts that *Somerset* speaks to the "urgency of voicelessness,

crime, poverty, and the silenced in inner cities.” He makes it clear that he can only speak for his hometown, but there is still a “particular urgency to speak to those issues. Not to speak for anybody—I can only speak for myself—but I think there are not enough people talking about class issues and racism. Especially white writers writing about being raised by at least one vocal racist parent and then being taught a doctrine of racism that you can either subconsciously adopt or reject.” Donaghy found that he was able to explore such issues of class and race in *Somerset* because he had dealt with the personal struggles of growing up in a racist household. It wasn’t until later in life that he was able to put it down on paper to make it an artistic struggle to learn from and give voice to because “not talking about it is not very productive and continues these cycles.” Donaghy wants his readers to see his truth and be able to take away the importance of being able to share the stories that they carry with people that they may otherwise never reach.

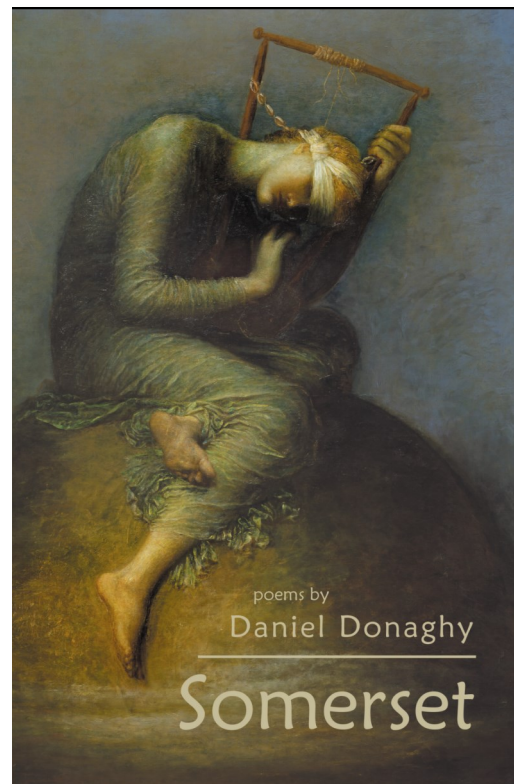
Following the interview, a poetry reading of Somerset took place. Students from Professor Donaghy’s poetry writing course opened the event by reading poems that they composed throughout the semester under his guidance. These poems ranged in topics, sharing stories from their pasts in ways that left the audience reflecting on their own experiences.

Former student, Daniel Carrie, followed the current students and gave a short speech to introduce professor Donaghy. In his remarks, he spoke about the impact that Donaghy and his class had on him as a student seven years prior.

Professor Donaghy took the opportunity to read poems from the previous collections, as well as pieces from *Somerset*, giving the audience a taste of the topics and issues that he tackles head-on throughout the books. Among the poems that Donaghy included in his reading, “Needle Park,” “Somerset,” “Teaching my daughter to ride her bike, I recall the one my fa-

ther stole for me from a black child,” and “Our block’s first black couple,” stood out for being particularly compelling.

The passion with which Donaghy spoke about *Somerset* was embodied in the pieces he shared at this reading. The struggles and issues that he depicts capture its audience and guides them through the reality, shame and heartbreak that comes from its author’s childhood experiences. *Somerset* is now out and available for purchase online, and it is worth purchasing.



English Night

by Angelica Reilly

Every semester, the English department hosts an event known as “English Night,” where outstanding students are honored, and some of the seniors present their capstone projects. This year, English Night was on Tuesday, May 1st, and it was something to see. Students, faculty, and parents packed into the Betty Tipton Room to witness the event hosted by Chair, Barbara Little Liu.

Liu delivered a heartfelt introduction to the event itself, and then each of the awards. This year’s winners were Cassidy Ricciardone for Service to the Department, Sean Gilmartin and Jessica Maloney for Lifelong Learning, Natalia Torcaso for Contributions to the Cultural Life of the Campus, Jessica Dontigney for Commitment to Teaching, and Amber Albe and Nicole Green for Academic Excellence. Dr. Liu got choked up because of how deserving all of the recipients are.

After the English Major awards, Dr. Liu went on to award the David and Janet Philips Scholarship, which was “established in honor of David and Janet Philips by their children Donald, Kimberly, Evan, and Sandra (all ECSU graduates).” David Philips was an ECSU English Professor and Emeritus who retired in 1990. This multi-year scholarship is awarded to an undergraduate student who has excelled in English and Theatre, with faculty in both departments collaborating to choose the recipient. This year, the scholarship went to Harry H. Gagne.

After Harry received his award, Dr. Stephen Feruci presented the First Year Writing Awards to students in College Writing and College Writing Plus whose writing was “innovative, creative, splendidly researched, or uniquely articulated.” This year’s awards went to Julia Montville and Joyce Figueroa.

During an intermission for refreshments, the audience was encouraged to look at posters displaying overviews of all the seniors’ capstone

projects, and then, the event shifted into the capstone presentations. Every senior presenting worked very hard for a full year to complete their projects, and you could tell in the quality of the work. Dr. Donaghy’s “To Sound Like Yourself: A Conversation with Poetry” class started things off, reading poems from their completed, book-length manuscript collections. Beth Crocker went first, reading four poems from her collection entitled “Gold Steps.” Her works were focused on and inspired by her life, accepting who she is and how she got there. They were raw, honest, and compelling pieces that anyone that has ever had a mental illness could relate to.

After Beth was Joshua LeBlanc. His poems were about self-discovery, and the entire collection was titled “Trailways.” The works he read were funny, captivating, and all around brilliant. His piece titled “Cheesy Love Poem” was full of alliteration, powerful visuals, and was truly fun to listen to.

Last but not least was Julia Bonadies, who read from her collection titled “Testimony.” Her poems were about family and faith, and they, too, were powerful. Through the poems, you could feel the important role faith played in her life, and it was beautiful to watch someone speak in front of a large group of people about something as powerful and intimate as religion.

When Julia finished, Dr. Susan DeRosa’s class titled “Memoir: Exploring the Private and Public ‘I’” was next. There were two presenters: Quinn McAdam and Juanita Wilbur. After Dr. DeRosa explained that memoir should not have the bad rap it has earned and that it is merely a way to tell your truth creatively, the women presented their projects.

Quinn’s project was titled “Choice: All In,” and it was about her experience with competitive gymnastics and having to give it up because of an injury. She read four excerpts from her memoir:

one about the injury itself, one about practicing years before the injury, one about physical therapy after the injury, and the final was about finding herself without the sport that defined her for thirteen years of her life. Even if the listener had no experience with gymnastics, the way Quinn wrote and read perfectly explained what it is like to go through losing something that defines you and then finding who you are without it.

The final presentation of the night was by Juanita Wilbur. She presented excerpts from her critical project, as well as her upcoming documentary film, entitled “Born Black... and Female: A Documentary and Critical Analysis In-

spired by bell hooks’s Memoir, *Bone Black*.” The film and the analysis of hooks’s memoir both explore what it is like to be a black female in today’s America with the ultimate goal of one realization: black is beautiful. Juanita was only able to show a trailer for the documentary, but if the entire creation is as good as that one-minute clip, Juanita will have created an unbelievably powerful and informative documentary.

After witnessing all of the presentations at English Night, it is clear that Eastern has a creative, intelligent, and dedicated English Department. If you’re free when next semester’s English Night comes around, try to attend so you can experience it for yourself.



Dr. McDonnell Honored

by Angelica Reilly & Dr. Barbara Liu

Earlier this semester, English professor Dr. Maureen McDonnell was the recipient of the Ella T. Grasso Award. Named for Connecticut’s first woman governor, it is an honor specifically meant to recognize the efforts of Eastern faculty who promote gender equality on campus. Dr. McDonnell is a deserving winner for said honor.

Dr. McDonnell played a leadership role in establishing Eastern as the only Connecticut public university that grants a degree in Women’s and Gender Studies. She directs and teaches in that academic program. In her classes, she engages students in a critical examination of the social and political structures that disempower and endanger marginalized groups—especially women, people of color, and LGBTQ individuals. In her Women’s and Gender Studies courses, she always includes assignments that ask students to become involved, developing their awareness of themselves as empowered voices who can have an impact on their own lives and the lives of others who are affected by various socioeconomic, political, or social inequi-

ties. She is the faculty advisor for Eastern’s chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), Best Buddies, and co-advisor for the Pride Alliance. Prior to the establishment of the Pride Center (which she played a significant role in helping to establish), she was also a primary faculty contact for both the Women’s Center and the PRIDE Room Collective.

In her acceptance speech, Dr. McDonnell said: “I appreciate [receiving this award] because of the legacy of Ella Grasso, and because of its reminder to be aware of possibilities to do intersectional work. Although this award specifically recognizes efforts towards gender equity, I know that you are aware of the needs to continue anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-ableist, pro-immigrant and other work that affirms our shared dignity and value. My students and colleagues have shown me ways to imagine better worlds, and to think through how we might improve and transform the conditions in which we find ourselves.”

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ENGLISH
DEPARTMENT

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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 Fall 2018 semester, please contact Dr. Liu at: liub@easternct.edu



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