

EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

## KEEP-ENG IN TOUCH

## English Department Newsletter

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2

SPRING 2019

A Message from the Chair

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

It is my pleasure to introduce another issue of Keep-ENG in Touch, the ECSU English department newsletter. You'll find articles about the accomplishments of current students, alumni, and faculty, as well as reports on events that have engaged our attention over the past semester, all thanks to the efforts of editors Alexi Boix and Vanessa Vazquez, as well as some other talented student contributors.

Once again, we are saying goodbye to one of our longtime faculty. Dr. Lisa Fraustino is retiring from Eastern. You can read her thoughts on her time here—and her plans for the future—in the article on page 2, and I hope you'll send her your best wishes for the next chapter in her life.

While we say goodbye to Dr. Fraustino, we are also preparing to say hello to Dr. Manuel Otero, who will be joining the department in the fall as our new Linguistics professor. Be sure to read the article on page 3 to learn more about Dr. Otero and all that he will be bringing to our students, and be sure to welcome him when you see him in the halls and classrooms come September.

Finally, to current students: as always, we need someone (preferably two students) to edit the Fall 2019 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. Familiarity with social media platforms is also a plus. 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

Message from the Editors

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter! It was a lot of fun to make, and we appreciate you taking the time to read it. Also, thank you to our contributors for doing such a great job!

Vanessa Vazquez and Alexi Boix



Page	Table of Contents
2-3	Farewell to Dr. Fraustino
3-4	Welcoming Dr. Otero
4-5	Still Waiting: Publishing Your First Story
5-6	Celebrating Dreams with Mark Sheridan
7-8	A Writing Tutor's Perspective
9-11	Nothing Happened, Everything Happened
11-12	Alumni Panel
13	Sigma Tau Delta Events
13-14	Brent Terry's <i>Troubadour Logic</i>
15-16	CREATE English Presentations
16-17	English Night

# Farewell to Dr. Lisa Fraustino

By Karen Daniels

Any English major at ECSU can attest to the vigor of the program, as well as the professors who bring varied strengths to the department. Mention Dr. Lisa Rowe Fraustino and you will be met with smiles and a willingness to share fond memories. Dr. Fraustino, full English Professor here at ECSU and a former department chair, is well known for her Children's and Adolescent Literature classes, as well as developing numerous courses within those genres, such as her popular ENG 209 Writing for Children and Young Adults.



Lisa Fraustino

As all good things are wont to do, "Dr. Lisa's" time here at ECSU has come to an end, and she is preparing to retire on June 1. However, rather than focus solely on her writing career, Dr. Fraustino has accepted a position at Hollins University as the Director of the prestigious graduate program in Children's Literature. Her duties will include administering the summer program and teaching one course per year, the perfect part-time commitment in her much-anticipated role as "fairy godmother" to the program.

Dr. Lisa (a nickname coined by her students in Thailand when she was a Fulbright Scholar there in 2006) has shown her commitment to the field of English from her initial degree, a BA in English with a minor in Speech Communication from the University of Maine, earned with Highest Distinction, followed by her MA, and culminating in 1993 with a Ph.D. focusing on English Literature and Children's Literature with a creative dissertation, *Ash: A Novel*. During her 17 years at ECSU, Dr. Fraustino has taught an astounding 22 courses, in addition to the

5 courses taught as a Visiting Associate Professor at Hollins University, encompassing both creative and critical aspects of literature and writing. During our interview, Dr. Fraustino mentioned this is something "fairly unique" that she brings to the table; her knowledge of both the creative and critical aspects. She shared that the pedagogy "came naturally" to her, in that she is comfortable teaching students to become "equally strong as scholars and creative writers." As her numerous published works suggest, Dr. Lisa can creatively express herself. Concerning grading, her goal is to efficiently evaluate "creative expressions as a reflection of student knowledge," and she believes that faculty "should provide space" within courses for student interest "without pushing our own area of expertise."

Returning to her beginnings, Dr. Lisa shared that she started out wanting to be a "writer who teaches," and found herself as a "professor who does some writing." She reports delight in returning to her roots, and will not give up being a scholar, but will shift her focus to writing more children's books. Dr. Fraustino also discussed what prompted her decision to accept a position at ECSU over her many other options. She states, "Eastern appreciates, encourages, and embraces the creative as well as the scholarly side of work and has a history of being respected in the field of Children's Literature... and how Kid's Lit shapes culture and creates new ways of thinking." While a bit somber about leaving ECSU, she positively radiates happiness over her new position at Hollins.

Finally, I asked Dr. Fraustino to share a special memory at ECSU. Not skipping a beat, she recalled the student club Writing for Children and Young Adults, or WICYA, which had "small but dedicated numbers." The club brought prominent visiting writers to campus, workshopped their manuscripts, and served as a "pilot group"

for the Writing for Publication course Dr. Lisa was developing at the time. She glowed as she stated working with students who love kid lit was “emblematic of what brought me pleasure during my time at Eastern.”

Additionally, she enjoyed conducting independent studies with students seeking a more personal approach to their education. She concluded our interview with the claim that learning is not linear, but a web of experiences among groups of students and faculty, and she sees herself

as an integral part of the “symbiotic system of support and excellence” that is the ECSU English Department. Something I took away from my classes with Dr. Lisa is that even the best laid plans can change and lead to something greater than ever imagined, and this led me to embrace the twists and turns that is the path we walk as college students. Please join me in wishing Dr. Lisa Fraustino the best and brightest future possible, and the opportunity to continue mentoring creative young minds.

## Welcoming Dr. Manuel Otero

By Eve Jimenez Sagastegui

After the retirement of Dr. Elena Tapia in January, the English department searched for a new professor to teach our Linguistics courses. After reviewing nearly 100 applications, conducting telephone interviews with 12 of the top candidates, and bringing five finalists to campus, the department’s search committee recommended that Dr. Manuel Otero, who was completing his Ph.D. at the Uni-

versity of Oregon, be offered the position. Dr. Otero has accepted and will begin teaching at Eastern in the coming fall semester.

Dr. Otero grew up in Miami, Florida where he was raised bilingually and bi-culturally as a Cuban-

American. Language has always played an important role in his life from his early education, to when he was an interpreter in Seattle for medical and social services, to when he worked on creating a written form for the language Komo in Ethiopia. He is well-travelled and has worked in various environments,

providing him with rich experiences that he wants to bring to Eastern.

Having to work while growing up established the work ethic he has today. He pursued his Bachelor of Fine Arts in the School of Visual Arts in New York City, and soon after he realized he had two passions in life: language and art. This was when he decided to begin the path of teaching languages or being the bridge between languages by working as an interpreter. It wasn’t until he joined his wife in Ethiopia that he was first introduced to the study of linguistics. When he visited the department of linguistics he was able to sit in on a class where he was amazed by how the breaking down and study of language was taught: “I remember one of the students was writing this language on the board, and he was breaking apart the words into little pieces, below he was writing what each piece meant. All the suffixes and prefixes. And I remember just thinking, wow. You can do this? People care about this?”

**“one of the students ... was breaking apart the words... . And I remember thinking, wow. You can do this?”**



Manuel Otero

After becoming more involved, he learned that the Ethiopian government was sponsoring language development programs where they hired linguists to help make a spoken language into a written language. Dr. Otero joined other linguists in becoming involved with this program where they began forming a written structure of the language Komo, one of the 85 spoken languages in Ethiopia that wasn't written. They started writing and teaching language teachers. They developed school books and small dictionaries—all in the efforts for those who spoke Komo to learn the basic rudimentary skills of education in their own tongue.

Dr. Otero knows the importance of language in our society and the way language is always evolving and never fixed. Languages adopt words from other languages, and it's an essential component to our species. With his work around the world, Dr. Otero knows how valuable both written and spoken language are to all cultures. He is passionate about understanding the evolution of language and how culture and domination of different countries in-

fluences the formation of new languages. Linguistics is more than the study of language; it's the study of history, culture, evolution. "We're breaking down the system piece by piece and we put the system back together...It's like a puzzle. Break down the system and see if the pieces fit together." These are components he wants to bring to his courses next semester and hopes to start discussion not only about the development of language but it's impact in our communities and the power it holds.

Next semester, Dr. Otero will be teaching College Writing and History and Development of the English Language. His hopes are to demystify writing: take the fear or hesitation in writing out and establish the connection to our human experience. "Speaking is similar to writing except you have more time to craft your argument. Convince your reader about your hypothesis. I'd like to make that kind of connection." Eastern is lucky to have someone joining the department who is so passionate about linguistics, and excited to join Eastern and contribute to the message that our university wants to spread.

---

## Still Waiting

By Ashlee Shefer

---

*The Allegheny Review* was the first literary journal I submitted my story to. The second one I heard back from. My first notice was a rejection, and as a new writer who'd never submitted my fiction to a journal before, this was devastating. However, rejection is part of the writing process. It's unavoidable, as is waiting. It took over three months for me to hear back from *The Allegheny Review*. It took me five months to even be confident enough to send out my story. And I don't think it's because I felt the story was bad. It was the opposite. I was so proud of it, so baffled by the fact that I'd actually written it, that I needed it to be as close to perfect as I could make it.

I wrote the story in my Advanced Fiction class about a year ago. I'd always known I liked to write, but this class gave me the opportunity to explore what it was about fiction that I liked. What draws me to create stories? What am I trying to accomplish? "Acts of Impulse" was the second story I wrote for the class that semester. It started as one scene. My narrator, Cassie, attending group therapy to deal with her mental illness. That spiraled into her complex relationship with her parents, her struggle with her sexual identity. Once I started writing, the story unfolded on the page faster than I'd ever written anything before. I was both excited and terrified to share it with the class

---

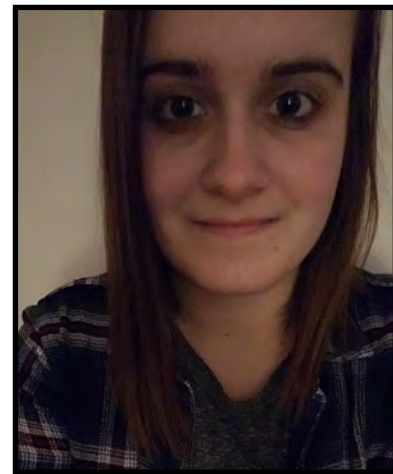
for my workshop day.

I didn't know this story would end up being my first publication. I was writing it just to write. My professor encouraged me to look into sending it out somewhere. The thought of other people reading it outside of him and my peers was intimidating because I didn't believe I was ready. How could I be when I was still in undergrad? But there are literary journals that only accept work from undergraduate students. They look for new voices, for people who have no experience with publication. *The Allegheny Review* is one of them. So, I sent it out because I figured the absolute worst thing that could happen was they would tell me no, and I would keep writing, and try again.

I suppose this is the curse of being a writer. We create and then we wait. We get accepted, or rejected, and then we write again. And we wait again. It took me almost five months of sporadic revising to send out "Acts of Impulse." Mostly because I'm a perfectionist and have a hard time giving things up, but also because literary journals have agendas. Some only accept submissions certain months out of the year. Some only publish once or twice a year. And even then, some can only accept two or three short stories in one issue. The odds seem to be against us.

It can be daunting, even disheartening, but the key is to just keep writing.

In the year since I've written "Acts of Impulse," I've also written at least five other short stories. Some of them I plan on sending out. Some of them I don't. But that doesn't mean my time writing them was pointless. Writing is like anything else. You work at it, you practice, and eventually, it pays off. Eventually, you get that acceptance from someone and it's just enough to persuade you to keep going.



Ashlee Shefer

---

## Celebrating Dreams with Mark Sheridan

---

By Alexi Boix

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, Mark Sheridan came to campus to work with students in an Interactive Poetry event. The event was located in FAIC room 115 from 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Mr. Sheridan is a member of the Connecticut Poetry Society, an organization that promotes poetry and related events all over the state. He has dedicated the last five years to the writing and studying of poetry. Before this, he worked with at-risk inner-city high school students in New Jersey.

Now, you may be asking yourself, what is interactive poetry? What makes it different from regular poetry? Mark Sheridan explains it as poetry where the audience participates in the creative process, and therefore, creates the outcome. This is in contrast with traditional art, where the artist alone completes the work, and the audience consumes it only after it is completed. By allowing the audience the ability to influence and mold the result, it helps to create a greater sense of inclusivity and cooperation

---

between both the audience and artist, as well as between members of the audience. As others share their stories and relationship with the artwork, more voices and perceptions are revealed and displayed through the art. In Sheridan's event, taking inspiration in the honoring of Black History Month, he produced a poem about "celebrating

### King Sized Dreams

The children picked up their dreams  
and set off.

The black dreams were bigger now.  
As big as any of the other dreams.  
But heavier.

They began their journey at night  
and stumbled often  
over unfamiliar ground.

Still, more black dreams were making it  
all the way to the end,  
where they lit up  
and showed others the way.

dreams," as featured here.

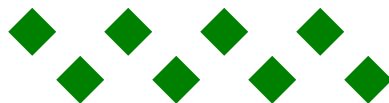
At this point in the event, Mr. Sheridan asked the room – about 20 students - what they thought were the questions being raised by the poem. At first, many students seemed unsure; not an unusual response to poetry, especially one so emotionally charged. But, as some braved the silence, the conversation warmed up. They wondered why it had to be at night, what exactly were the black dreams – what makes them different from other dreams? The discussion delved deeper, talking less about the actual poem, and more about the fears of today. Have we done enough? How much further to go? The general consensus was that there was still a long way to go, but again, it is important to appreciate how far we, as a socie-

ty, have come: celebrate the dreams that have made it, and encourage the ones still budding. Unfortunately, most of the people at the event had to leave for a class midway through, so the event was cut short. If it had gone on the full hour, its possible that the poem could have been developed further by the audience, perhaps fitting in more perspectives or a clearer sense of what the poem meant. Whatever the case, the poem did influence the audience, and hopefully opened their eyes to a new viewpoint or way of thinking.

This is what interactive poetry does. Yes, it was in honor of Black History Month. Yes, it was in appreciation of the dreams that have been realized. But underneath all of this was the purpose of getting people to talk. No matter the subject, by talking about it we deem it important, something worth our time and energy, worth our awareness and our respect. If the way we open dialogue is through art, whether that be poetry or a drawing or a play, we get a conversation through the lens of culture, perspective, and creativity. And what better way to celebrate dreams than through a medium of freedom and expression?



Mark Sheridan, *Connecticut Poetry Society*

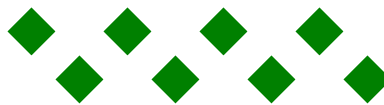


# A Writing Tutor's Perspective

These are some responses from Eastern's Writing Center and ENG 100P tutors, who were asked about their experiences. They were given free range to talk about whatever part of their experience had influenced them the most or was most important to their interactions with fellow students.

## Amanda Moundraty

Becoming a writing tutor at Eastern Connecticut State University has brought me nothing but a great experience. My only regret about the writing center is not applying earlier in my years here. I have met great people, ranging from tutors themselves to students that come in for help. Working in the writing center has strengthened my abilities as a writer since I am in an environment of different authors. Having the opportunity to read and edit over papers from numerous majors and backgrounds has expanded my knowledge and my ability to work with papers that just aren't related to English studies. The challenges that I have come across were in working with papers that I myself am not familiar with, such as different formatting and subjects. However, over the course of my senior year I have learned to appreciate the variety of papers that allow me to reach out of my comfort zone. Becoming a writing tutor is a great experience that I will always hold with me once I graduate.



## Charley Pietrzyk

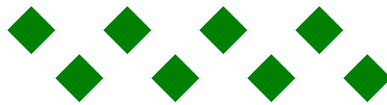
To me, being a tutor means being a peer mentor. As such, I am able to help my fellow students with their writing in different ways than the professor. I've noticed that, over the course of my tutoring experience of two semesters, students are more likely to share their concerns and ask me questions rather than the professor. I am not their professor or another "adult"; I am a student who is in the same boat as they are. One of the things that they are more likely to do in my presence versus their professor is to vent or complain about the assignment. This venting can be helpful in that it gives us somewhere to start and we can work through why they dislike the assignment and figure out how to approach it. However, that can be challenging as well if we cannot move past the initial frustration about the assignment. Students also tend to open up about their struggles in the class in general. I used the word "mentor" before and I use that because in our sessions, we don't always talk about the assignment. Sometimes, we discuss their strengths and weaknesses within the class as well, and since I am a student like them, I can help them from a student's point of view; I can share my own strategies and resources. I love being a tutor because it puts me in the position to not only help other students with their writing but also, I get to be their mentor and be a resource. That's my favorite part.

## Danne Hall

Being a tutor at ECSU'S Writing Center has been an experience to say the least. The past four years of my college career have centered around being a tutor and trying to understand what that means to myself and the students I work with. Anyone can say a tutor is an individual meant to help you comprehend the subject matter you walk in with, but what about when it's merely based around your writing? How much am *I*, as the tutor, able to explain *writing* to someone when I'm still learning myself? Despite spending four years at the WC, and despite becoming the assistant director, I still struggle with helping students with their papers.

I find that the biggest challenge I face when working with students during a session is the revision, *not* the editing. The number of times I've run through a paper and *just* fixed the grammar or spelling of the piece are too many to count on the appendages on my hands *and* feet. The students that continuously return to the Center to work with us are the ones who gain the most out of their sessions, and I've found that I spend more time really getting into the revision – into the questions and content and *details* – when I've met with a student more than once. Don't even get me started on the amount of people that walk in and state they want to “just have someone look over their paper for mistakes.” It can be tiring to have to explain that we're not just here for a simple check over, we're meant to help you strengthen your paper.

When I first started at the Writing Center, I was unprepared for the years that would follow, and the events that would take place and make it somewhere that I grew not just as an academic, but as a writer. I'm still not the best at writing, I still struggle with concepts and ideas and getting something *down*, but I've started to recognize that that's all a part of the larger process. I can't always churn out the perfect essay or research paper. Drafts and everything before the final product are meant to be messy, and tutoring has shown me that everyone can use that extra help, even if they don't think they do.



## Ashlee Shefer

I'd never tutored before I came to ECSU. The first time someone made an appointment with me I was terrified because I wasn't sure if I would actually be able to help them. I knew how to write, but would I be able to help someone else with their writing? Being a creative writing student is what I believe helped me adjust to being a tutor. No, I'd never tutored, but I had experience participating in workshops and reading other people's writing. I'd made comments, written letters of critique, and discussed people's writing in a group. The workshop experience gave me some insight on what to look for in papers for other disciplines. Organization, context, sentence structure. These are all elements that go into creative writing. I learned that having a conversation helps writers form new ideas and work through the thoughts in their heads. Having this collaboration is a big part of tutoring. I've seen people experience breakthroughs in their papers from sitting down with me just to bounce around ideas, see what works and what doesn't. I'd already been doing this with creative writing workshops. Once I realized that tutoring writing was just a continuation of something I'd already been doing, that fear went away. I grew to love tutoring. It's made me a better critical thinker, and in turn, a better writer.



# Nothing Happened, Everything Happened: Behind the Scenes

By Kaitlyn Melninkaitis

On March 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, the ECSU Drama Society put up their student-led production of the original play, *Nothing Happened, Everything Happened*, written as part of my English 499 Directed Research project. I worked on this project with Dr. Reginald Flood throughout the academic year, in hopes of creating a piece that addresses the controversial topic of sexual assault in a way that makes the audience think. The reasons behind writing about such a difficult topic were to make peace with a similar event that had happened to myself and to start the conversation to create a change in the way society handles cases of sexual assault. In order to write the play, I used my own personal experiences as inspiration for the plot and who the characters were.

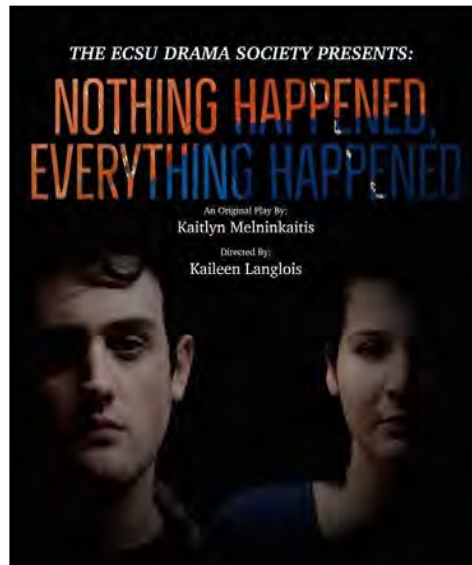
*Nothing Happened, Everything Happened* is a full-length two act play that tells the story of Allie Kane, who brings her long-term boyfriend, Jared Harper, to court for taking advantage of her at a college house party. The play takes place in the court room, where we see testimonies and consults between the clients and their lawyers. We are also brought back in time through flashbacks to see the events leading up to the incident at the party and Allie's decision to bring it to court. However, through these events we learn that Jared wasn't the only one to blame for what happened to Allie.

Throughout the play the character dynamics play an extremely important role in helping the story come together. I created seven very distinct characters for *Nothing Happened, Everything Happened*: Allie Kane, Jared Har-

per, Brooke Sanchez, Charlie Pearson, Attorney Dougherty, Attorney Langdon, and Judge Wilkens. Allie Kane, as mentioned before, is the protagonist throughout the story. Jared Harper is the perpetrator of the crime. However, he is completely oblivious and naïve of why what he did was wrong. I created Jared's character in this way because I wanted him to be an example of society's lack of understanding about what consent is. Brooke

Sanchez is Allie's best friend, but we learn from the events that take place that she is anything but that. Brooke is manipulative and controlling. She was the one that brought the pills and convinced Jared to use them on Allie. Whereas, Charlie Pearson is the opposite. Charlie genuinely really cares for Allie, and all he wants is for her to be safe. He's considered to be the middleman of the story because everyone is able to open up to Charlie and be vul-

nerable around him in a way they are unable to do with anyone else. The next two characters are the two attorneys: Dougherty and Langdon. Dougherty is Allie's lawyer, and tends to take a therapeutic stance towards Allie, as well as an activist against sexual assault. Langdon is Jared's lawyer, and he is simply doing his job. He distances himself from Jared and the case because he does not necessarily side with Jared, but he was hired by Jared and is only doing his job to help his client. Finally, there's Judge Wilkens. This character serves as the all-seeing presence of the story. He controls what happens in the court room and ensures that the case is being helped



professionally and appropriately.

I wanted to create such dynamic characters for *Nothing Happened, Everything Happened* in order to make writing the story easier. When I took Dr. Flood's playwriting course, he told us that in order to make writing easier, we need to know everything we possibly can about our characters. Creating such dynamic characters, such as the ones in *Nothing Happened, Everything Happened*, made the dialogue flow out onto the page and become Alie's story.

Once the play was written, it was time to start putting it up on stage. To do this, we started with finding a production team: director, lighting designer, scenic designer, sound designer, costume designer, etc. I was very fortunate to have been able to work with a production team that was very open to my ideas about the show. Not many playwrights have that same opportunity. My director, Kaileen Langlois, always made sure to ask my opinions about a scene that was being rehearsed to ensure that my vision was being put on stage in the best way possible. Once the production team was picked out, we needed to have auditions. We had one night of auditions where anyone who was interested in being in the show could come. The actors had to do cold reads of chosen scenes of the

play. They would receive a scene with a scene partner, quickly look it over, and perform the scene for the production team. Through the auditions, we ended up with a case of thirteen people and we didn't have to turn anyone down! We were then able to begin with rehearsals. We started with table work so the actors could focus on who their characters were, what the characters were feeling, and what relationships the characters had with one another. After about a week of table work, we moved into blocking out the scenes and figuring out the physicality work of each character. We soon moved into tech week, where we were able to rehearse with lighting, sound, scenery, props, etc. Finally, we had our performances of the show.

At the end of each show, we had a talk-back where the audience was given the opportunity to ask us any questions they might have had. Questions varied from costume choices and line choices to why I wrote the play. Based off of the talk-backs that we had, I was able to assume that those who came to the show really only had positive feedback to give. I was also able to make the assumption that I achieved my goal of the show: starting a conversation to help change the way society handles cases of sexual assault.

---

# Nothing Happened, Everything Happened: From the Audience

---

By Angelica Reilly

On March 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, the Eastern Theater department put on English Major Kaitlyn Melninkaitis' original play titled "Nothing Happened, Everything Happened." This production, her 499 Capstone project, is a telling piece about sexual assault in a college environment and far more advanced than most would expect from an undergraduate writer.

Going back and forth between a present-day court case and the incident at hand, the play tells the story from

the point of view of the victim, the perpetrator, and their mutual best friend. The play covers the complexities in being a middle man in a situation as traumatizing as this, along with being assaulted by a partner, and having people you thought were in your corner turn out to be instrumental in backing you into one instead. The ending was something that happens all too often – the assailant got away with it.

While this ending might seem like the kind of message you don't want to send on a college campus, it's important for people to understand the realities of the law and sexual assault. When asked why she ended it the way she did in *Playwriting with Professor Reginald Flood*, a class she is a TA for, Melninkaitis stated the play ended the way it did because "that's how it ends in real life, more often than not. The play needed to be a reflection of the real world."

The middle man didn't tell the entire truth in fear of ruining his friend's life, and because of that, all of them have to live with the knowledge that they could have helped the victim and chose not to. The message of this play, and that of the real world, is that full honesty is the only way to ensure everyone gets a fair shake, and Kaitlyn, the director, and the actors did an absolutely amazing job of getting that across.

## Editing and Writing and Publishing, Oh My!

By Vanessa Vazquez

This semester's English at Work Alumni Panel was centered around the theme of "Career Opportunities in Writing, Editing, and Publishing" and took place on Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The panelists were Ryan Bahan ('15), Angela DiLella ('14), Jennifer Kuhn ('08), and Christopher Morris ('18), who began by discussing how they all found their footing after receiving their undergraduate degree in English. They all unanimously agreed that it was all about finding work that fits your passions—even if it means switching jobs around until you find what interests you.



One approach is to start early in finding careers or internships with companies that offer positions relating to specific fields of interest, like Morris, who completed a paid internship with Elephant Rock Books which later de-

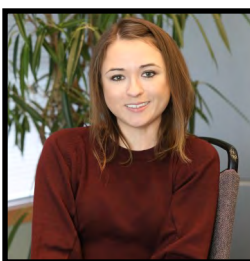
veloped into a job in editing after he graduated in 2018. Although a large portion of this position involves editing manuscripts, it also entails assisting in designing and executing marketing campaigns for the press's publications, and planning public events for the press. While this job has given him valuable experience, he will be leaving Elephant Rock next year to pursue his MFA degree in Creative Writing and pursuing the next step toward his long-term career goals.

Like Morris, alumnus Angela DiLella is finding her way in a writing career. Currently, she creates and posts content for a gaming and popular culture website called N3rdabl3 while also working as a ghostwriter under contract. "I get an outline and then I have to pump it up and make it look good and, you know, make it 16,000 words instead of just 100 or 200." She is also working on finishing the graphic novel that started out as the thesis for her MFA at The New School.



Angela DiLella  
"I get an outline and then I have to pump it up and make it look good and, you know, make it 16,000 words instead of just 100 or 200."

The most experienced of the panelists, Kuhn has found her work with technical and medical publishing to be fulfilling in the sense that, though her career is not widely publicized, it is rewarding to be a part of scholarly publishing that contributes to making research and knowledge of medical advances accessible on an international level. She also mentioned that her line of work gives her access to multiple positions within her company both in print and digitally, including marketing, digital media, and advertising revenue services. "Print is not dead," she said. "It's certainly alive and kicking. A lot of people like to see that."



Jennifer Kuhn

Bahan frequently mentioned his dexterity as well when it came to his line of work at Stagecoach Digital, producing content and providing digital support in the form of websites, email, and social media for their clients



Ryan Bahan

to promote and support their brands/organizations. On a daily basis, Bahan works closely with North America's leading nonprofits—including UNICEF, The Breast Cancer Research Foundation, and the National Audubon Society—to service their digital needs using his knowledge from

his Eastern English degree in conjunction with his M.S. in Digital Media from Champlain College.

When asked by the moderator, English Department Chair Dr. Barbara Little Liu, what advice they have for Eastern students in terms of what helped them in the workforce and academically, Morris responded with his advice that during undergrad it is important to make sure one understands “What it is you want to write, how you want to write it, and how you hope to grow as a writer in that context.” Morris added that the Writing Fiction course he took at Eastern helped him to practice writing and taught him how to go further in the field. He noted that “just having regular writing exercises was good for getting me into using every free second that you have getting something done.”

Ryan Bahan contributed to the conversation by adding his own experience with job hunting after graduating, citing that for a year he supported himself freelancing

and surviving on food stamps while using his research skills taught by Eastern to market himself to companies. Bahan advises students to not be afraid to put themselves out there and make those connections on websites like LinkedIn and Squarespace. He also mentioned that Eastern offers consistent practice in writing that helps in the real world when products are needed on a quicker basis.

DiLella advised students from her position as both a writer and artist and said that her biggest piece of advice would be to “find your balance with your work” and to never not have paper nearby. She also mentioned that specific courses that she took at Eastern which helped her in her career would be any course on Medieval Literature and her Creative Nonfiction course which she also participated in as a Teacher's Assistant.

Finally, Kuhn suggested that the best thing to do is market your assets to employers and make sure to keep an open mind when considering positions—because you never know what you might like until you try it. Kuhn also mentioned how the ENG 461/462 Senior Seminar helped her to be “a rigorous thinker and a really solid communicator.” She urged students to take advantage of everything that Eastern has to offer and to stay in touch with professors after graduating; they can serve as yet another resource.

All in all, the panel was interesting and provided a lot of good advice. If you missed it, you can watch a video of it, as well as past English at Work alumni panels, on YouTube. Links are available on the English department website.



# Sigma Tau Delta Ice Cream Social

By Riley Bancroft

Sigma Tau Delta hosted an ice cream social game night on Wednesday April 3, which had a great turnout! English majors, among many other students who stopped by, had the opportunity to meet and get to know each other while enjoying delicious ice cream sundaes alongside Sigma Tau Delta members and their advisor, Dr. Allison Speicher. This event provided an opportunity for English majors to make connections among their peers and for returning Sigma members to get to know the newest members, inducted in December 2018. Games were pro-



vided by various members and Dr. Speicher, which were intended to give students a way to learn more about the type of environment that Sigma Tau Delta offers and how this honor society can benefit students. However, this time around, many participants chose to engage in stimulating conversations with each other about shared classes and literary interests. This event was quite successful in cultivating a relaxed environment in which English majors were able to socialize and make connections among peers.



## Brent Terry's *Troubadour Logic*

By Melody Cabarroguis

Professor Brent Terry thanked “literature for giving us a reason to come together” when he was introduced to the stage for the poetry reading event held on March 7, 2019 in the Science Building room 104, to commemorate his new poetry book, *Troubadour Logic*. Currently, he has 3 poetry collections, namely *Yesnomaybe*, *Wicked Excellently*, and the new addition, *Troubadour Logic*. Mr. Terry teaches at Eastern Connecticut State University and lives in Willimantic. The atmosphere was

made comfortable by the unique room structure, the refreshments given and the content chattering of the students, as well as Mr. Terry’s welcoming introduction and visible excitement.

Throughout one hour of reading, the audience seemed to like his enthusiasm. Most of his work captured our interest, as we gave our full attention and followed his reading with applause. Mr. Terry often gave some background information before reading each poem.

He described one poem, “Ars Poetica,” as a good way to start a book because it explains a poetic process or the source of the poetic process of writing. “Ars Poetica” was entertaining because a student joined him in reading the piece. This helped the poem flow better, as it was structured to be a sort of conversation.

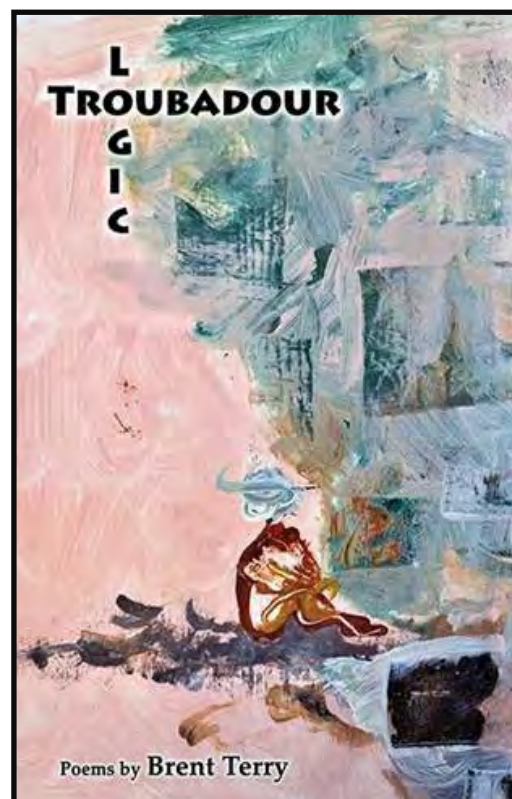
His poems, in general, didn’t simply revolve around happy and sugar-coated pieces. They are as raw, real, and dark as they can get. The next piece, “Little Blue Thrill” was interesting because of its sexual tone. He told the audience that he created this piece when he watched *American Idiot* on Broadway; I found it funny when he also mentioned that this was going to be a poem about Viagra. It is interesting because I don’t often hear this kind of work.

Similarly, he read more poems with powerful lines that should be shared. He read, “All the young dudes were busy dying... I was out of the field most of the Summer, guess I still am.” I did not remember what the title was, but I felt a powerful tone of loneliness, and the narrator brings the readers to its present situation. The next was “Travelogue: A Minnesota Elegy for Ted Berrigan.” Another line I thought was powerful was, “... do you in bits still hear her, sing her, celebrate her there in Hades pinning?” I think that this poem had the purpose of bringing the readers into the depths of the memories of an individual. Last, he presented “The Smell of Something Burning” with a line, “One last doo-wop on streets where dreams die and flaming, are born again-then off, rising, singing their gospel of smoky soul.” I see this as a significant dream that is hard to achieve but still alive in one’s heart and mind.

Before he read his piece, “Dr. Dammit Sonata in B-flat Minor,” Mr. Terry also shared his fascination on the heart being removed from the body and still beating. He explained how to create poems that are essential to the

writer and the world and still make it stand the test of time. He mentioned the importance of violence and how violence does not have to be bad. Trees grow from the bursting of the pod and childbirth is a violent offspring of a mother to her baby.

Lastly, Mr. Terry shared some important tips in writing. It is interesting how his pieces just come to him through his everyday routine and observations. For example, when he wrote “Little Blue Pill” by watching the *American Idiot* show and a Viagra advertisement, he said, “What if I can put all that in a poem? Better yet, what if I could put it all in a sonnet?” Ideas emerge any time, at any place. The end work depends on the individual’s skills and passion for merging them together. He discussed how other people claim that we should create poems about important and true issues because the world is realistically harsh. He refuted this notion by saying, “You need to write what you need to write.” This helps me to appreciate all kinds of literature; we should create whatever we are passionate about.



# CREATE English Presentations

By Jennifer Zuniga

Every year Eastern Connecticut State University holds CREATE (Celebrating Research Excellence and Artistic Talent at Eastern). This year it was held on April 12, 2019, from 8 am-5 pm at the Student Center. Throughout the day, students from English, Art & Art History, Visual Arts, Performing Arts, New Media Studies, Biology, and so many other departments were able to present research and creative activities; this was done through talks, professional posters, live music, dance performances, art and photography exhibits, documentary films, and panel discussions. The English department contributed to the conference with a variety of presentations.

Kaitlyn McIninkaitis conducted an interactive presentation about her play “Nothing Happened, Everything Happened”; she discussed the concepts and ideas that helped create this original play. (For more about her project see page 8). Another playwright, Matt Bessette, discussed his play “Dedecus.” He described the different dramaturgical components that went into writing it for his senior capstone.

In addition to the dramatists, there were a number of other English majors participating. The day started with six research-based presentations. Sabrina Diaz presented her analysis of family dynamics in Christopher Durang’s black comedy plays *The Marriage of Bette and Boo* and *Baby with the Bathwater*. She incorporated theories of black comedy and how family dysfunction played a role in those plays. Amber Albe’s presentation was called “From Edging to Gooning: The Rhetoric of Pornosexuality on Tumblr.” She focused on IT identity in relation to “pornosexual” sites on Tumblr, addressing how this community formed and sustained itself through their use of a shared digital platform and vocabulary, and opening larg-

er questions of identity, agency, and cultural capital. Mary Wilterdink’s presentation was called “Teaching Young Adults *The Merchant of Venice*,” she examined the injustices that are brought upon Jews, and therefore, the necessity of defining the ugliness of life in Shakespeare’s play while teaching it in high school English classes. Jenn Kristoff’s presentation was called “The Ghost of the House: Women, Death, & Domesticity in the Short Stories of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.” She talked about two of Gilman’s stories, “The Yellow Wallpaper” and “The Giant Wistaria,” and how she sees both protagonists not as angels, but as literal or metaphorical ghosts, giving textual evidence that supported her claim. Then, there was Samantha Price, whose presentation was called “Resisting the Grand Narrative of Homelessness: Local Stories from the Windham No Freeze Hospitality Center.” She conducted research on homelessness and focused on qualitative analysis of interviews she conducted with people she met when working at the shelter. Her intention was to showcase the actual lives of the people and debunk common stereotypes about the homeless. The last oral presentation was Hannah Hokanson’s “Look How Far We’ve (Not) Come: Rom-Com Heroines and Shakespeare.” She compared Viola from *Twelfth Night* with the three heroines from recent romantic comedies *27 Dresses*, *He’s Just Not That Into You*, and *No Reservations*, looking at how these empowered women made autonomous choices to control their own paths to success. She found that contemporary romantic comedies do not compare favorably to Shakespeare’s play.

Next up was a panel of memoirs. To begin with, “Anything” by Mia D’ Amico was based on a twelve-page memoir in which she recalled painful childhood episodes

to figure out why her mother grew into an abusive parent. D'Amico ended up forgiving her mother after understanding her personality. Emily Deloge's "Letters to Abby" included a series of interconnected vignettes that explored family dynamics, gender roles, and relationships. Some were letters addressed to her sister Abby, regarding the importance of self-love and recalling memories from her childhood and relationships that have influenced her own life story. The third presentation was "The Hero's Journey of Self Discovery: A Queer Individual's Expedition of Identity and Love" by Samantha Price. Samantha told her story of discovering and accepting her sexuality, as well as the hard trials that came along the way with being a member of the LGBT community.

The English Department encourages its students to take part in the CREATE conference, showcasing the variety of their research and creative work. This day of English presentations couldn't have been pulled off if it weren't for the students and faculty mentors who were willing to put in a lot of their time, work, and effort. The CREATE conference, which happens only during the springtime, is open to all undergraduate students willing to conduct research based on their own interests. If you are interested and want to participate next year, look for a mentor and start from there. And if you don't want to present yourself, consider going to the conference to listen to the presentations, learn something new and interesting, and support your fellow English majors.

## English Night

By Vanessa Vazquez & Alexi Boix

This semester, English Night was hosted on May 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm in the Johnson Room. English Night is an event put on by the English Department to recognize outstanding students and act as a platform for some seniors to present their senior capstones. Family, faculty, and fellow students filled the seats in support of these remarkable students. English Department Chair, Dr. Barbara Liu, welcomed everyone and began by introducing the recipients of the English Major and First-Year Writing Awards.

English Major Awards given on behalf of the department of English highlighted students who showed exemplary progress in their English courses as well as promising futures in the field. One such award was the Award for Service to the Department, which was given to Jordan Corey for her outstanding support of the English Department. The Award for Lifelong Learning was given to Jenn Kristoff and Mary Wilterdink for their perseverance in con-

tinuing their English education at Eastern. The award for Contributions to the Cultural Life of the Campus was presented to Eve Jimenez Sagastegui for her dedication to literary publications on campus that highlight cultural aspects at Eastern. The award for Excellence in Teaching or Tutoring was awarded to Samantha Coburn for her dedication to her responsibility as a teaching assistant to Dr. Christina Garcia. The award for Outstanding Future Educator was given to Emily Hill for her academic excellence in pursuing a double major in English and Education. Finally, the award for Academic Excellence was given to

Elena Sorrentino for her superior ability in and dedication to English studies. Congratulations to all of the award winners on behalf of the English Department!

Students who submitted work in either ENG 100 or ENG 100 Plus and showed immense progress and talent in their writing skills were awarded with the First-Year Writing Award. From their strong



Award winners with Dr. Barbara Liu



research skills, creativity, and their commitment to discussing difficult topics, these students have been selected by faculty and writing center staff. One award was presented for Creativity and Innovation to Jalaena Rock for her work with Professor Sarah Lennox. Also receiving an award was Micaela Pereyra for her Excellence in Research. Congratulations to these first-year writing award winners!

Caroline Freedman led the charge of Senior Seminar Presentations with her research on “The Agenda: The Goal of Female Comedians” completed for Dr. Miriam Chirico’s “Studies in Comedy.” Freedman flawlessly executed her presentation on the intentions of female comedy writers as they pave the way for future females in comedy. Freedman referenced popular females in comedy such as Amy Schumer, Tina Fey, and Sarah Silverman to make her point. She emphasized the role these women play in bringing attention to inequality in the workplace.

Mary Wilterdink then took over the mic as she vouched for the reintroduction of Shakespeare’s comedy *The Merchant of Venice* in high school classrooms.

Wilterdink acknowledged the offensive anti-Semitism in the play and addressed it gracefully by offering perspectives from the Jewish community mixed in with a lesson in British history at the time. Wilterdink believes that the play can offer a lesson on sensitivity and history about Jewish persecution and, therefore, will be valuable in classrooms. Wilterdink

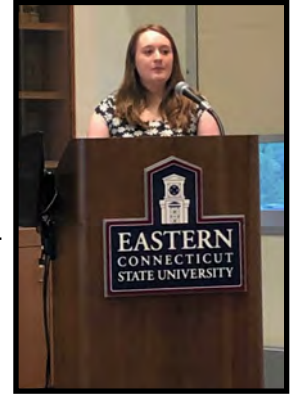


Brianna Crysler

then provided evidence of how she would teach the play within her classroom with several lesson plans that focus on learning about stereotypes and teaching students to question the validity of stereotypes in their modern lives.

Next were presentations by students in Dr. Meredith James’ seminar on “Literature of the Wild West.” In her presentation, “The West doesn’t forgive any woman –

unless she’s got a man,” Brianna Crysler examined the common characteristics of Westerns as pioneered by John Ford, which include negative characterizations of women of both white and native origin, while promoting masculine values. The more negative depictions of Native American women in both classic and modern Westerns, encouraged the prejudice and racism we see even today. She concludes that while there are “positive portrayal [s] for white women, the task of creating a modern Western film geared towards positively characterizing Native American women is one that still requires addressing.”



Karleigh Link

In the last presentation of the night, Karleigh Link began with her research into the culture of the United States LGBT community, the recent rights movement, and the start of tolerant attitudes from the rest of the population. She finds that, even before the Europeans came to the United States, America was populated by gender non-binaries, called Two-Spirit Native Americans. By analyzing how LGBT and Two-Spirit Native Americans interacted with and faced oppression from colonists, Link argued how intrinsically connected LGBT identities are to this land. Despite their struggles of racism, homophobia, and health crisis, the Two-Spirit Native Americans remain strong, a testament to the endurance and permanence of LGBT and Two-Spirit people in America. Link called for the embracing of these aspects of culture that are under-represented and under-appreciated.

Dr. Liu concluded the event, stating that the high quality of each student’s thought and work was plain to see, and she noted that the focus on social justice was encouraging. The English Department certainly is host to a number of talented, dedicated, and creative individuals. If you’d like to witness the hard work of these students for yourself, make sure to attend next semester’s English Night.

*Thank you to those who contributed their time and effort to this newsletter.*

**Angelica Reilly** is a senior English major and Sociology minor.

**Melody Cabarroguis** is a freshman English major and Archeology minor. She has written for the *Campus Lantern*.

**Charley Pietrzyk** is a junior English major and Writing minor.

**Jennifer Zuniga** is a sophomore English and New Media Studies major and Writing minor. She is the Advertising Manager for the *Campus Lantern*.

**Karen Daniels** is a senior English major focusing her studies on Multicultural YA Lit.

**Danne Hall** is a senior English major and an Asian Studies minor. They have written for *Eastern Exposure* and the *Campus Lantern*.

**Kaitlyn Melninkaitis** is a senior English major.

**Ashlee Shefer** is a senior English major and Writing minor. She has been accepted into the competitive MFA program at UNC Greenboro and will begin her studies there in the fall.

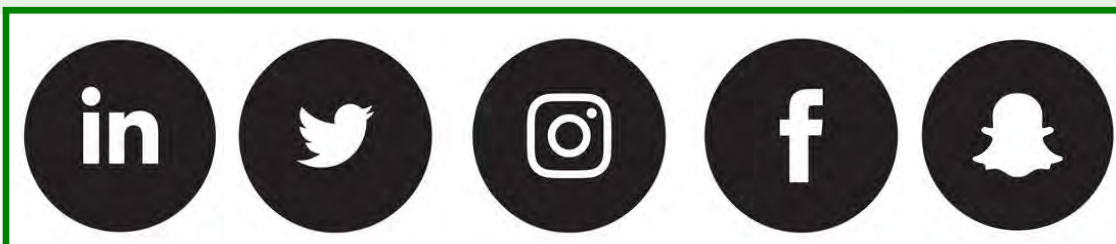
**Riley Bancroft** is a junior English major.

**Eve Jimenez Sagastegui** is a senior English and Computer Science major with a Writing minor. She will soon be featured on the Mochila Chat podcast, reading her poems.

## Seeking Editor and Social Media Intern!

English lovers, writers, and social media enthusiasts alike: consider a Social Media and Editing Internship with the English Department! If you are a current student interested in this internship opportunity for the Fall 2019 semester, please contact Dr. Liu at [liub@easternct.edu](mailto:liub@easternct.edu)

*Follow Eastern's English Department on Social Media*



ECSU English Dept.

@ECSUEnglishDept

@ecsuenlshdept

@ECSUEnglishDept

@ecsuednglish