

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 happily welcome you to another issue of *Keep-ENG in Touch*, Eastern's English department newsletter. Thanks to the efforts of editors Rob Murray and Yvonne Picard, as well as some fine student writers, you'll find it full of articles about events that have engaged our attention and the activities of our current students—from Writing Center tutors to seniors completing independent capstone projects. You'll also get an update on our newest faculty member, Dr. Manuel Otero, and his thoughts on joining the Eastern community. And, finally, we've added a bit of poetry. I hope you'll enjoy reading it all.

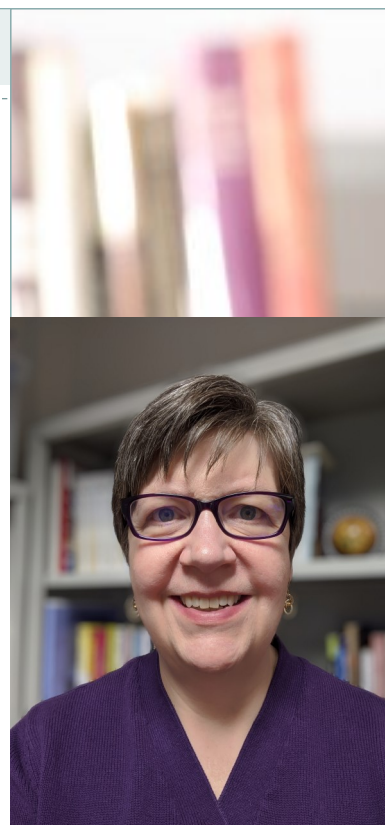
I wish you a happy and restful holiday season and a peaceful new year.

Dr. Barbara Little Liu
liub@easternct.edu

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

We present to you this edition of *Keep-ENG in Touch*. We hope you enjoy our work and we are grateful for the opportunities this has provided us to connect with our campus. We would like to express our immense gratitude to all of our student writers who contributed to the newsletter. This wouldn't have been possible without you!

-Rob Murray and Yvonne Picard



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FOLLOWING UP WITH DR. MANUEL OTERO

DEANNA PELLEGRINO

In the last issue of *Keep-ENG In Touch*, we were introduced to Dr. Manuel Otero who was getting ready to come join the English Department here at ECSU as the only linguist, following the retirement of Dr. Elena Tapia last January. Now in his first semester, Prof. Otero has made a noticeable impact on the students, faculty, English department and community at large here at Eastern.

As a Miami-born world traveler, Prof. Otero has lived and worked in several countries across the globe, often in places where violence is surprisingly not engrained into the culture. He says these experiences have invariably shaped him as a person, but when asked why he then chose to return to America, he responded, “I met a girl on a bus, and I married her.” That girl, his now wife, Becki, encouraged him to leave his job as an interpreter, move to Ethiopia where she was working as an ESL teacher, and find his passion. It was there in the absence of “working to survive” that Prof. Otero could explore what really interested him. “It was the first time there was a pause button in my life since I was 15.” It was only then that he discovered his love for linguistics and decided to become a professor.

Previously, Prof. Otero taught as a graduate assistant at the University of Oregon. He says it’s been tough adjusting to life in New

England from the green, beautiful landscape and culture of the Northwest, but he likes it here nonetheless. He’s enjoying the campus so far, though he has only taught in



Dr. Otero with Deanna Pellegrino

Webb and Goddard. “I’m really enjoying being here. I’m really enjoying learning from my students and my colleagues. Hopefully I can make some sort of contribution—carve out something for linguistics.” As far as friends go, making acquaintances is all he’s really had time for, though professional, friendly relationships with students make up for his current

lack of camaraderie on campus. “I really like my students. They’re responsive and respectful, they say hi to me on the sidewalks, which would never happen at the University of Oregon.”

The opinion is clearly mutual, as Prof. Otero is regarded highly by his students. “At the start of nearly every class we have a candid conversation about what’s going on in the students’ lives, which is really nice,” says student Alicia Labrecque. “We laugh a lot in this class, and we talk about funny, new terms in modern language and dissect them grammatically. Totally nerdy but actually really fun.” Other students speak to his ability to make linguistics accessible for non-majors: “The material can be really challenging,” says Charley Pietrzyk, another of Prof. Otero’s

students, “but he has us doing a lot of group work so we can problem solve together, and it really helps. And he loves when we ask questions.” Personally, I can say that this class is one of the most refreshingly dynamic English courses I’ve ever taken, due in part to the tactful integration of memes as a learning tool. Prof. Otero speaks to the validity of incorporating modern media in an otherwise strictly academic environment: “[Through memes], we can analyze the complexities of sentence structure and culture as it connects to language in an engaging and accessible way. We can ask, what is it drawing from life, or society?”

This is Prof. Otero’s first time teaching Writing or in an English program, but you wouldn’t know it due to the sheer level of commitment and energy he puts into each class, seamlessly blending in new material to make us feel like we are all capable, problem solving linguists. It’s no wonder he says he’s obsessed with this class—we are too. In addition to The History and Development of the

English Language, Prof. Otero teaches College Writing. When asked how the classes compare, he says, “I have to remember that freshmen are freshmen.” He treats them more gently than his upperclassmen, walking them through foundational skills like how to use their emails and OneDrives. He also says he is excited to see how Linguistic Analysis and Modern American Grammar play out next semester.

In the previous newsletter, he said he “hopes to demystify writing: take the fear or hesitation in writing out and establish the connection to our human experience.” When asked if he believes he achieved this goal this semester, he replied, “It’s definitely a long-term goal for sure, since this is brand new for me. But I think I’m making progress. If you set a high, high bar, hopefully you get close to it.” As one of his students, I can say that he is definitely making progress. Overall, Prof. Otero’s lectures are a hit; his passion and excitement for linguistics lights up the classroom and creates a pleasing, communal environment.

CENSORSHIP LEAVES US IN THE DARK, A SEMINAR ON THE DANGERS OF CENSORSHIP

KAYLA BROLIN

On September 23, 2019, Eastern hosted an exciting event titled “Censorship Leaves Us in the Dark—Keep the Lights On: The Suppression of Thoughts in Ideas, Cultures, Places, Arts, and Children’s Literature.” This event was held in the J. Eugene Smith Library in The Paul E. Johnson Community Conference Room and was organized by Eastern librarian Hope Marie-Cook. Many Eastern professors presented, and some English major students presented their defense of LGBTQ+

representation in children’s books.

For English majors, this type of event is extremely important to attend. The topic of censorship is at the core of English study and its members should defend freedom of exploration for scholars and casual readers alike. The reason for this event is because censorship is keeping readers from critical thinking and that most of the content is being censored unnecessarily. Readers should be able to decide what media they consume, instead of that

choice being made for them. The presenting professors also argued that withholding "sensitive material and information" from the public is unethical and that all information should be accessible.



Many professors spoke at this conference, and a few of them addressed the fact that much censorship affects LGBTQIA+ representation in books—especially children’s books, as many parents think that LGBTQIA+ content will corrupt their children and that same-sex couples are suggestive and inappropriate. Some students also presented during the conference; they shared their personal stories and stressed the importance of LGBTQIA+ representation in books. They also shared information on how to stay active in fighting this kind of censorship. The effects of censorship are also seen in scientific research; an example of this is in research on climate change. The scientists studying and proving the effects of climate change have been prevented from sharing their evidence with the public, as they risk losing their careers if they reveal these findings. Dr. Severance from the Criminology program

discussed censorship in prisons. She explained specific topics that are banned in the prison systems in the US, which vary by State. The reason for this is that most States are independent, not one communicative system; thus, the majority of prisons independently decide what content is allowed for their prisoners. These banned topics include survival guides, coloring books, and magazines containing sexual content.

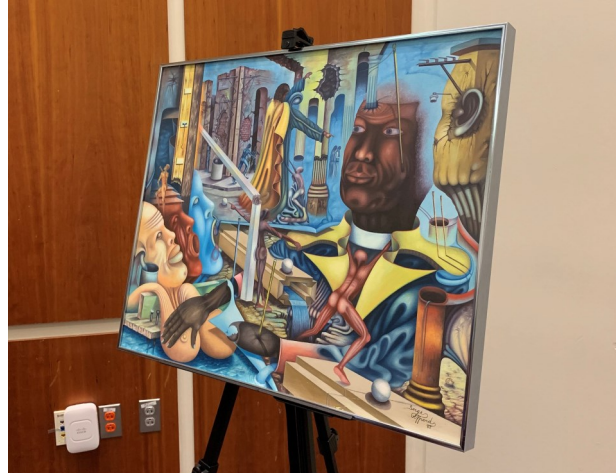
Dr. Brandon Cunningham discussed censorship through a neutral historical perspective. He included transcripts of statements Presidents have made that were withheld from the public. Dr. Cunningham also showed the development of censorship in media over time.

Dr. Adam Braver focused his attention on censorship involved in academics. He also brought up the concept of self-censorship, even asking the audience if we would censor ourselves if it meant we would be safe from persecution. He also gave examples of professors in other countries who went to prison for including extra information, such as educating female students and helping students learn English, in their college courses.

Lastly, Dr. Tulia Tikhomma presented her thoughts on the censorship involved in art. She discussed how art has been censored for centuries. Her presentation was filled with many different images of “sensitive” art, and she explained how it is all necessary for expression. She also showed images of banned works of art and art found around our campus. The banned art depicts nudity and violence,

but it was necessary for the artists' messages. There will be an art exhibition featuring the banned works in the Spring of 2020.

After attending this conference, I have a different view of censorship. The topic extends farther than just simply removing sexual or offensive language from libraries. Instead of trying to protect learners, it seems to be used as a tool for keeping information away from readers. Censorship can prevent people from having the right to choose what media they consume, and it is everyone's responsibility to prevent this. Attending this conference introduced me to ways I can stay active



and involved, and I would recommend anyone involved in academia attend similar events in the future.

WELCOME NEW TUTORS

In the Writing Center we've always had a diverse group of tutors—diverse in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation—all of whom are excellent writers and subtle, intelligent thinkers. While many are English majors, we've also had tutors from other fields such as Business Administration, Biology, Communication, Sociology, and Psychology. This year's new crop of tutors continues in that tradition. To become a writing tutor, contact Dr. Rita Malenczyk at malenczykr@easternct.edu at any time to let her know of your interest. Tutor applications are due in April of the academic year, with interviews conducted at the end of April and beginning of May; successful applicants are notified at the beginning of May and take a one-credit course, ENG 275: Tutoring Writing, the following fall. -Dr. Rita Malenczyk

Evelyn Musto [Sophomore. Majors: Secondary Education & English, Secondary Education]

I wanted to become a tutor because I thought it would help with teaching later on in my career. I already teach middle school students during summer school in my town, so I believed tutoring and learning how to effectively help someone with their writing would be beneficial to when I work with students over the summer. Learning how to tutor other students with their writing will help me in the future not only with communication between me and the student, but also how to understand my own writing much better. Tutoring doesn't only help improve the tutee's writing, it also helps improve the skills of the tutor.

Aiyana Hardy [Sophomore. Major: English, Creative Writing]

The reason I chose to become a tutor was because I love the idea of genuinely helping people improve their writing skills. I feel that writing is a consistent learning process—not just the tools we use in writing, but also the fact that we get to learn about ourselves as writers, what styles we like, where we need improvement; it's a constant cycle. Tutoring will help me in the future because it helps me sharpen my own writing and reading skills. It also helps me with learning patience and understanding. Everyone needs a little help with something, and that help should be given with no frustration. That's the goal I hope to achieve.

Yvonne Picard [Senior. Major: English, Creative Writing]

I wanted to become a tutor because I really enjoy helping people, and I thought this would be a good opportunity to get more involved on campus. I always try to prioritize addressing what the student is most concerned with and making sure they're following the parameters of the assignment. My English 100P students all have specific skills they need to demonstrate in different projects, and it's important to make sure they're doing so. Tutoring has taught me how to prioritize and be patient, which are great skills to have in any career.

Olivia Sidman [Junior. Major: English, Literary Studies]

I decided to become a writing tutor because peer reviewing and collaborating on written pieces in a classroom setting has always interested me. Being a tutor has enriched my own writing skills and has given me valuable experience working collaboratively with students spanning multiple fields of study. After a successful session, both the tutee and the tutor should feel like they are better thinkers and writers, and I believe that I have definitely learned so much about my own scholarship and abilities throughout my first semester of tutoring.

Kayla Brolin [Sophomore. Major: Biology]

My reasoning for wanting to become a tutor was simple: I knew I was skilled in writing and wanted to help others who were struggling. Also, I wanted to set an example for non-English majors that you can excel in writing without studying English. In the medical and scientific field, the ability to write is extremely important—we must be able to articulate our ideas and research. As a tutor, I can help be a guide for their vision to come through in an organized manner. The feeling of helping comfort a student and achieve their goal together is endlessly rewarding. In the future, I see my lessons learned as a tutor benefiting me greatly. Whenever I am asked about my experience being a tutor, I reply simply: “It is amazing.” My sessions are always a learning experience for me as well. It is great practice for interpersonal skills and helps you to learn different methods of approaching a problem.

Ben Stratton [Junior. Major: English, Elementary Education]

There were a few reasons that being a tutor appealed to me. I love being able to help people, and it's a really good feeling to be able to help someone else feel more confident about the work they're doing. I also want to be a teacher someday, so this will be valuable experience when I'm preparing for graduate school and beyond. I try to help the student come to new ideas naturally, without giving them the answers. It's important to remember that every student has different needs, and that there is no one size fits all tutoring method. Someday, I'll be an elementary school teacher, and while kids might not be exactly the same as college students, I'm learning valuable lessons here at the tutoring center about how to help people learn that will apply even to the classroom!

Oscar Garcia [Junior. Major: English, Rhetoric and Composition]

I wanted to become a tutor to help students produce the best pieces of work they can and in order to gain better insight into which assignments best enrich students' education. I approach writing sessions by creating a relaxed environment in which the tutee feels comfortable to share their works and focus on what they feel they need to work on. Being a tutor will aide me in becoming a better instructor and supply me with the knowledge I will need down the road when I go on to get my PhD.



POETRY READING IN WINDHAM HONORS JULIA DE BURGOS

YVONNE PICARD

On the corner of Jackson Street and Terry Street, there is a little park created in honor of Julia de Burgos. It is small, with an amphitheater on one end. On the other end, there are benches and picnic tables in an open area. On September 28, it was filled with poetry and song. People sat at the amphitheater and benches, while many others brought their own chairs in anticipation of the event. They gathered here to honor the life and work of Julia.

Julia de Burgos was a Puerto Rican poet and activist. She advocated for Puerto Rico's independence and rights for women and African/Afro-Caribbean writers. She attended the University of Puerto Rico, graduating in 1933 with a degree in teaching. She stopped teaching in 1934, and in 1936, she began her work for the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. De Burgos published two books of poetry in her lifetime and a third posthumously. She spent the last years of her life in New York as a journalist and editor, working for a progressive newspaper called *Pueblos Hispanos*. She struggled with alcoholism and died in 1953 due to pneumonia complicated by her health issues. While de Burgos herself never visited Willimantic, she is a cultural icon to many Puerto Ricans, who make up over a quarter of the town's population.



On this day, at her park, her poetry was celebrated. It was read first in Spanish, then English. The passion with which her poems were read and the lilt of the Spanish prose was musical. There were intermittent breaks for music to play, with dancing and singing all around. Senator Mae Flexor and local politician Jean de Smet even stopped by to enjoy the celebration this year. Dr. Donaghy, one of our professors and a writer of poetry himself, also attended. There was a tent in the corner of the park serving drinks, Spanish rice, and flan. The casual air almost felt like a party. Juan Perez gave a speech honoring Julia

and spoke about oppression in Hispanic countries. Cries of "libera Puerto Rico" rang out as he spoke about the movement for Puerto Rico to become its own country and be independent from the United States. Juan was one of the people responsible for the park's creation in 2001. He was working as an intern for Curbstone Publishing when he and Sandy Taylor started the project. "We couldn't stand looking at the dilapidated building," Juan said of the lot across from Curbstone. They petitioned for the revitalization of the lot, and now it is the park as we know it today. Curbstone Publishing was built on political activism, publishing anti-war

poetry and supporting minority writers. A park to celebrate de Burgos was a natural step for them. Curbstone Publishing has since shut down, but now operates as the Curbstone Foundation, supporting events like this designed to enrich the public.

Hearing de Burgos's poetry and the passion with which it was read was beautiful. The energy of the event was contagious, with people dancing and singing as though it was a party. Having lived in Willimantic my entire life, I was surprised to realize I had never heard her poetry before, despite this park being here for the last 18 years. It made me feel more connected to my town. I loved coming together with like-minded people I might not otherwise have known, over poetry I might not have ever heard.

This event was part of a series called Poetry in the Park, sponsored by the Curbstone Foundation. They take place on the fourth Thursdays in June, July, August, and September. Each event typically focuses on a specific poet, and occasionally those poets attend and read their works themselves. It is rumored that Martin Es-

pada, a popular poet who was at one time published by Curbstone, might attend next year! Any Eastern student interested in becoming more involved with Willimantic and supporting the town they learn in should attend. It is a great opportunity to expand one's mind while also appreciating Willimantic for the beautiful and diverse place that it is, one that has been home to Eastern for over a century.

*¿Cómo habré de llamarme cuando sólo me quede recordarme, en la roca de una isla desierta?
Un clavel interpuesto entre el viento y mi sombra, hijo mío y de la muerte, me llamará poeta.*

*What shall I be called when all remains of me is a memory, upon a rock of a deserted isle?
A carnation wedged between the wind and my own shadow, death's child and my own, I will be known as a poet.*

-Poema para mi muerte, Julia de Burgos



STUDENT POETRY

Driving home from 3rd shift in early spring
- Janet Bannister

The trees line the road
Hands in pockets, silent
Like awkward attendees
at a junior high dance
But the wind whips in
Boisterous and big
Slapping backs and bumping hips
Grabbing the willow and
Bending her in a dip
Insisting on celebration until
The trees let loose and toss
the confetti they've been clutching
The seeds flutter and spin
Bringing me in
to the fun.

Mama's Long Walk - Avery Smith

Sweat trickles down her mocha brown forehead.
She's fatigued but determined;
As she strides and steadily walks,
She confidently carries heavy bags filled with processed cereals and meat with a gallon milk.
Effortlessly shouldering the weight of the world,
As well as the weight of providing for her family.
She takes a deep breath and counts: one, two, three;
Struggling for breath, she licks her cracked big lips.
She stops and swings her bags across her shoulder
And digs in her bag as if she found treasure.
She found it: the red, chilled fizzy pop.
"Its like 103 degrees," she mumbled to herself.
She chugs on it as if it was the last drop,
And wipes her backhand on her mouth and sighs in relief.
She calls out to her children to stay away from the busy road.
It was your average day being with mama
Walking in the blazing sun while she effortlessly helped me
And my siblings home before anything happened
Mama turns around and her brow is stern;
She calls out, "Avery, hurry the hell up we do not have all day to be out here, it's going to storm soon!"
I remember the roar in her voice:
It gave me goosebumps and my fragile bones tingle.
You never wanted to waste mama's time or
Disobey her.

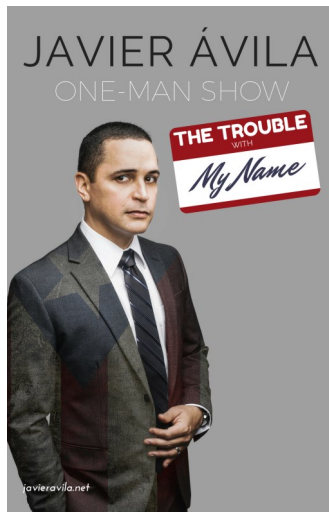
Dziadzu - Charley Pietrzyk

Sitting in your four-year-old leather chair
Still shiny as though it were brand new
You always did take such good care
Of all your things; people too
It must be because of the struggles
You and Babcia had to overcome
You never had much nor did you seem to mind
Everything you could ever want was gathered before
your eyes
Your five children, sixteen grandchildren, and beautiful wife
Christmas is always the same
We visit, we say Grace, we eat, we laugh, we cry
Or at least you cry
You never have to say anything about it but I see it in
your eyes
The way you look about the room, sitting silently in
your chair
The room chatter must fall to a drone as you observe
Your crystal blue eyes glazed over
A slight closed smile, your pale skin wrinkled with
years of being moneyless
Babcia occasionally walks over to check on you or
hand you a glass of water
You break away to give her your attention but immediately
go back to watching
The snow is falling outside, it's one of the firsts since
November
It's warm inside, the fire crackles and pops
You use both hands and arms to lift yourself from
your chair
The chair squeaks as your body leaves it
You walk slowly and with a hunched back
Picking up a log from the rack, you toss it in
Sparks fly up towards the sky
You sit back down, again using both your arms
Sinking back into the leather you begin watching
again
I see your eyes more clearly now
They are teary but you are still smiling.

*Want More? Check out Eastern
Exposure, the literary magazine,
published by the Creative Writing
Club. The next edition will be re-
leased in April 2020*

THE TROUBLE WITH HIS NAME

KALON HALL



On September 26th, Eastern's Intercultural Center hosted Javier Ávila, poet and Professor of English at Northampton Community College, to perform his one-man show, *The Trouble with My Name*, in the Fine Arts Instructional Center's

Concert Hall. Jess Camera, graduate intern of the Intercultural Center, says, "For Latinx Heritage Month, we were really looking for something that we knew would reach our campus climate and the audience to really not only draw our Eastern community, but also the surrounding community to really get involved ... We wanted to bring something that we knew was going to be informative, but also be fun and engaging and just exciting to have people attend."

To anyone entering the space, it was merely the FAIC's concert hall, but to the incoming crowd here to listen to Javier Ávila speak, the stage became what can fondly be considered an abuela's front room. For nearly two hours, Dr. Ávila captivated the small crowd with stories of his life, pulling in audience participation and causing laughter even at moments that seemed tense. As described by his 'about page' for *The Trouble with My Name*, "...Javier Ávila sheds light on what it means to be a diverse citizen in this changing political climate... Ávila examines the complexities of identity as a cultural construction."

For Dr. Ávila, this one-man show is an important part of his everyday life, as it traverses the history of his family, as well as his own struggles as a Puerto Rican in America. As he puts it, "All my life in Puerto Rico, I was *white*." Dr. Ávila told of his youth in Puerto Rico, of his father's service in the war, which still haunted him well after he had returned. He spoke of one of his grandmothers, who lived to be a 103, and who—he found out after her passing—was arrested and imprisoned for wanting Puerto Rico to have independence. Ultimately, the reason for all this history is to draw to his present day, to explain the struggles of what his family went through, but also the triumphs. Dr. Ávila closed with his final poem, *Bloodline*, written to both his son, and to the public. It speaks to the various women in Dr. Ávila's life—and his wife's—that have shaped their son, and also shaped them. The poem ends with "I am the future of America! / I am the future of America! / When you see me, / you'll see yourself."

During this 65-minute performance, Dr. Ávila took the crowd on a journey through his history, his struggles, and his triumphs. It was comedic and heartfelt, and it asked the viewer to consider their own prejudices, to look at what they were built in to. As Dr. Ávila put it, "What I believe is the strongest thing in our



country, is our diversity.” When asked what he believes to be the most important thing to take away from the show, Dr. Ávila responded, “The fact that we’re really, really basically the same, and if they can acquire empathy, I think empathy is the purpose of literature. So, if they can put themselves in my shoes, the way I can put myself in their shoes, and understand that we’re all in this together, I think we would have a much better future. Which is why I end the show by saying, ‘When you see me, you’ll see yourself.’ That’s what I want them to see. I want them, for *anyone*, to see me, a person who would be considered brown, and perhaps *exotic*, for people to say, ‘He’s just like me. He’s just like *me*.’ And I learn from you, you learn from me and that’s the way I think the future is gonna be. Inevitably. I just want to see the process and get there. Because I think a lot of people want to go back to another world, and I think we need acceptance and a lot of love.”

After the show, I was able to ask Dr. Ávila a few questions, which he was kind

enough to respond to as he finished signing books for those who attended his show. When asked what it is like performing his pieces and this show to the public, his response was, “It’s a labor of love, and I want them to be felt. I want them to be more of an emotional experience rather than an intellectual. Therefore, when I read them, I need to feel something profound. And once I do, I know they’re ready. If I read them out loud and I myself cry, which I do often with the last poem that I read, I know that it’s going to have an effect. And it’s a great source of joy and pride to be able to do it. It’s a great privilege.”

As the show finished that night, I felt a sense of community, despite not knowing anyone at the event. In such a politically charged time, it was important to have Dr. Ávila’s show at Eastern. It gave the community of Eastern and Willimantic a chance to look at our country’s attitudes through the eyes of someone who had seen the struggles of those with privilege, and those without.

ENGLISH MAJOR DIRECTED RESEARCH PROJECTS

NARCISSISTIC PARENTING

Mia is an English major with a concentration in Literary Studies. We asked her to write about her Senior Capstone Project for ENG 499 because it is unique and explores a topic that there is little existing literature on. It is a shining example of the creative and compelling endeavors that are possible in Directed Research. —Editors

My directed research project is titled “A Hybridized Memoir and Analysis Challenging the Tropes of Familial Narcissistic Abuse in Literature and Reality.” Narcissistic parenting is a complex and surprisingly common style of raising children that sets them up, essentially, for utter failure. Narcissism is a term that most people are familiar with, but its influence on parenting is more of a mystery. And while there are whole websites

MIA ANGLE

dedicated to it and its many forms and consequences, as well as books written by psychologists about women and their mothers, I found myself, a child of two very different and codependent yet divorced narcissistic parents (one of which I am completely estranged from), unhappy with the attention and coverage it was receiving.

I also found myself unhappy with what I viewed as the representation of narcissistic family structures in much of the literature I was reading and being assigned in classes. One, titled *Nothing Holds Back the Night* by Delphine de Vigan, follows a woman who is a victim of her mother’s mental breakdowns, which are themselves a symptom of the family-wide narcissistic abuse. At the end of the

memoir, she forgives her mother for poking needles into her sister's eyes before she reached the age of 10, among other things, and even praises her courage for being able to keep living. The narrator barely addresses her own emotional devastation. It forced me to think: why is forgiveness championed over self-care and preservation?

The word that I returned to over and over again as I read these books, and as I continue my research, is accountability. How do we hold parents who emotionally abuse, neglect, and sabotage their offspring accountable? As children, we cannot. And because there is no physical proof, and because society has a habit of claiming these things are family business... who can? Not the authorities, not neighbors, not family friends. The only people who can hold these types of parents accountable is the children themselves, when old enough—but how can they feel justified doing so, when culture, art, and their own abuse insists they shouldn't? Not only is everyone around them telling them to get over it, the literature they are exposed to is as well.

And so, this is my project: to explore the recurring characteristics of narcissism in literature, to compare it to my own experiences in memoir, and to prove that the habit of painting parents as misunderstood saints is nothing more than a harmful lesson to children of narcissists to silently persevere. When finished, the project should be a braided memoir-and-analysis hybrid that answers my research question and deconstructs my own trauma.

CODE MESHING PEDAGOGY

Courtney is double majoring in Elementary Education and English. We asked her to write about her Senior Capstone Project for ENG 499 because it expands on concepts she had learned in her major's coursework. It is an excellent example of how Directed Research can be used to explore familiar concepts in more depth and specialized to one's interests. —Editors

My directed research project, called "Exploration of Code Meshing Pedagogy in the Elementary Classroom," stemmed from a

My main method of research has been to read books that revolve around abusive family structures through the lens of psychoanalysis, and to glean from this analysis what message the book is giving its reader. Most often, it is that we should forgive our abuser because they are our parent. My experience thus far has been gratifying: my hypothesis before I began this project is, so far, accurate. There is also a concerning lacunae in academia regarding narcissistic parenting portrayed in literature, which is quite motivating—why am I the only one talking about it, or at least dedicating substantial time to the topic and its answer?

"It was this university telling me that my questions were important and deserved answers, and that trust in my process and encouragement of my ideas was more valuable to me than I can say."

Having the personalized option of ENG 499 was, for me, the opportunity to write about something that I felt a deep desire—no, a need—to write about, to get off my chest, to make sense of. It was this university telling me that my questions were important and deserved answers, and that trust in my process and encouragement of my ideas was more valuable to me than I can say.

COURTNEY SISSICK

final project that I completed in ENG 204, Introduction to Writing Studies with Dr. DeRosa, during my sophomore year at Eastern. The project looked at the concept of code meshing, which is the intentional act of combining different dialects and forms of language in one written or spoken artifact to privilege linguistic diversity. I examined how it was used in Chance the Rapper's album *Coloring Book*. The album illustrates how

Rap and Gospel genres, two styles that are not often categorized together, can diminish the stereotype that all rap music is overtly explicit. Chance's album brings them together as a single, coherent unit by the biblical allusions that he includes within his lyrics.

Code meshing is the opposite of code switching, which means to switch a dialect or vernacular into another based on the audience that a person is speaking to, usually to Standard English. Code switching creates a hierarchy of languages, portraying Standard English as being superior to all other forms. While we are often taught in school that Standard English is "correct" over other forms, many scholars I've read see this as "linguistic racism." One such scholar Vershawn Ashanti Young says that languages are already diverse naturally, and we must realize that code meshing exists in the world around us—from politicians to pop culture—and embrace it in our classroom pedagogy. I chose to further my research on these concepts because I wanted to see the influence and impact of teaching code meshing in the classroom as a way of acknowledging the diverse students that I may have in my own classroom one day.

Prior to meeting with my Faculty Advisor each week, I conduct research about the discussions from the previous week to help add to what we already know. Since I am in pre-student teaching, I also am able to bring experiences and topics that are addressed in my classroom, as well as my Education classes. So far, this research has deepened my knowledge of how teaching grammar and language has evolved over time, how policies such as the Common Core State Standards and the Teacher Education Certification Assessment (edTPA) have influenced the way educators teach grammar and standard English, and the struggles that educators are having with practicing and applying code meshing in

the classroom. Educators realize that their students come with diverse backgrounds, cultures, and dialects, but they are struggling to remove the bias that those who speak Standard English are perceived as more intelligent than those who do not. To refute that bias, code meshing diminishes the hierarchy of languages that code switching promotes because context is still understood no matter what dialect you are using.

This directed research project is meaningful to me because it combines my two majors, English and Elementary Education. Throughout my years spent at Eastern, my majors have often been kept separate and were completed in different ways, but this option has provided me with the opportunity to combine two fields that I enjoy and do research on a topic that I can bring into the classroom with me one day. By entering the conversation on code meshing in the classroom, I hope to spark ideas in the minds of other educators so that we can continue to create a classroom that celebrates the students' identities and cultures rather than stripping or ignoring who students are or where they come from.

"This option has provided me with the opportunity to combine two fields that I enjoy and do research on a topic that I can bring into the classroom with me one day."

ENGLISH NIGHT 2019

On December 5th, the Fall 2019 English Night was held in the Betty Tipton Room of the Student Center. This event hosted by the English Department highlights some of the dedicated work students in the English major have put in throughout the semester. Despite the cold weather, every seat in the house was filled with family, friends, and faculty. Everyone was excited to see what amazing work the students had done, and as the chatter in the room was brought down, the event was under way.

To begin the evening, Dr. Barbara Liu, the Chair of the English Department, awarded the Constance Campo Memorial Scholarship to Benjamin Stratton. He was recognized as a non-traditional student who is exemplary in his studies with his sensitivity toward gender and diversity issues. This scholarship is given in memory of a former longtime member of the English Department staff, Constance Campo, who also showed special concern for those same issues that Benjamin has illustrated. Congratulations, Ben!

Immediately after, it was time for Dr. Stephen Ferruci, Coordinator of the First-Year Writing Program, to award 2 students in the College Writing and College Writing Plus classes the Spring 2019 First-Year Writing Awards. Freshman writers Paige Tomko and Olivia Wronka were recognized for their essays “Of Justice” and “Dorming at Burr Hall: A Review for In-



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coming Freshman” respectively, and they both received thunderous applause from the room as they received their awards.

Next up was the 2019–2020 induction for the Alpha Epsilon Delta chapter of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honors Society. With an astounding 33 inductees, chapter Co-Presidents Elisabeth Cretella and Amber Schlemmer, alongside Dr. Allison Speicher, welcomed the new members with excitement and grace, as the to-be and current members read their pledge to the honor society. One by one, each of the inductees was called to receive their certificate of membership and honor cords which serve as recognition for their excellence in the English major or concentration.

After the induction, it was time for the main event. Students in Dr. Kenneth McNeil’s Capstone Seminar: Love, Sex, and Marriage in the Victorian Age, gave two presentations. First up, Elizabeth Keefe presented her fantastic work titled “‘Last Words on Greece’: The Role of Literature in the Lives of Homosexual People in Victorian England” and took the crowd through the highs and lows of the lives of incredible Victorian poets like Oscar Wilde and Amy Levy. Despite some nervous laughter, Liz expertly delivered an engaging presentation. After her, Shannon Carroll showed off their project, “Être Levé,” an incredibly creative endeavor that remodels the ending of a Victorian classic,

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, in a way that is empowering to women and adapts modern-day sensibilities. With equal parts knowledge and charisma, Shannon kept the audience interested throughout the presentation. Both presentations earned roaring applause and even drew out some interesting and tough questions.

Finally, Dr. Liu returned to the podium to thank everyone for their attendance, and everyone was set loose on the refreshments table. The posters for the stellar capstone projects by Devon Thomas, Tara Prochorena, and Ciara Tennis were set up and ready for viewing by interested attendees. Once people had their fill, the room slowly emptied, and the evening reached a comfortable conclusion. The event was phenomenal; English Night is always a major high-



light of the semester, as it lets us all see the kind of hard work our peers do. Everyone is already looking forward to what next semester's event has in store.

Hopefully Dr. Liu got her fill of prosciutto-wrapped mozzarella.

COMING UP... SPRING 2020

The Eastern Symposium on First-Generation Students:

On April 8, 2020, Eastern will be hosting a one-day symposium on first-generation students. This symposium, funded by a Davis Educational Foundation Presidential Grant, seeks to engage our university in a campus-wide discussion on first-gen students—what we know about this student demographic and ways we can help our first-gen students to persist and graduate. To widen our horizons, learn with others, and discover other practices, this symposium will be open to all members of the Connecticut State University System. Keep an eye out for this event, as some of your fellow English majors are presenting!

English Night, Spring 2020:

The English Department hosts English Night every semester. Be sure to attend next semester because there are 3 dynamic Senior Seminars being completed next spring: Dr. Garcia's Human Rights Rhetoric, Dr. Youngblood's Works & Films of Studio Ghibli, and Dr. Malenczyk's Rhetoric of Crime!

Here: A Poetry Journal:

Next semester will see the release of another edition of *Here: A Poetry Journal*, an international poetry journal that features best-selling authors alongside writers near the start of their careers. This journal is orchestrated by our Creative Writing club. They will be hosting a release reading in February or March. For more details, contact easternwriters@my.easternct.edu.

Student Poetry to Film:

Dr. Donaghy will be working with Eastern film professor Brian Day on a collaborative project with his Advanced Poetry Writing Workshop students next semester. It will involve Professor Day's film students making short films of student poems. It's an exciting venture and we're looking forward to seeing what the students in both courses create. Interested? Sign up for ENG 382-01 Advanced Poetry Workshop.

TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Deanna Pellegrino

Kayla Brolin

Dr. Malenczyk

Kalon Hall

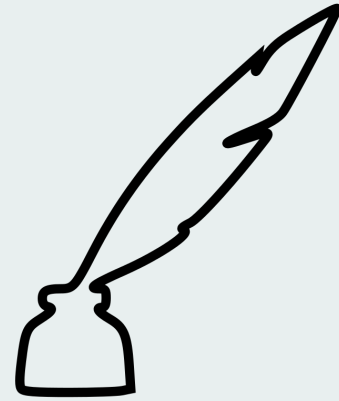
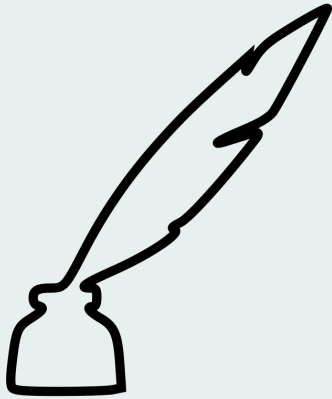
Mia Angle

Courtney Sissick

Our new tutors

Our poets

Thank You!



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