

KEEP - ENG IN TOUCH

A Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Fall 2015 edition of Keep-ENG in Touch, the semi-annual newsletter of the English Department at Eastern Connecticut State University. Thanks go to Seth for a truly excellent job as editor-in-chief and to all the other student reporters for their fine coverage. You'll see that we had a busy semester of visiting speakers and activities for our majors and minors. In these pages you'll also learn about some exciting things our alumni are doing. If you have a story to share, don't hesitate to let me or the Spring newsletter staff know!

Lisa Rowe Fraustino
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And to current students, if you would like an opportunity to intern with the department or with one of our faculty on another pre-professional experience, please send me an email. I'll get you ENG touch with the right person!

A Message from the Editor

I would like to thank Dr. Fraustino for giving me the opportunity to work on the newsletter. I would also like to thank my fellow intern Lily Vu for collaborating with me throughout the semester. Finally, I would like to give a special thanks to everyone who was willing to write for me and work with me in order to make the newsletter possible.

Seth McCulloch
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Author Claudia Mills Speaks at Eastern

By Mikayla Zagata

On Wednesday, 23, 2015, the English department had Claudia Mills come speak on didacticism in children's literature during Eastern's University Hour event. She is a recently retired professor of philosophy and the author of over fifty books for children, some of which are *Kelsey Green*, *Reading Queen*, *Zero Tolerance*, and *Factors = Trouble!* The focus of her talk was on the dilemmas didacticism presents in children's literature: How do we teach children ethical lessons without hitting them over the head with it? How do we still keep the text first and foremost a story while trying to impart messages?

Mills began her talk by explaining didacticism and its positive and negative outcomes. Today in children's literature she has observed what she called "didacticism in modern dress," in which modern messages for children were carried out sometimes too heavily.

Oftentimes, morals backfire on children if a story's message is carried out this way, and children would want to do the immoral thing rather than the moral. Also, by trying to teach morals, sometimes authors introduce prejudices that don't exist in children naturally. She stated that she "reads to learn something about the nature of the human condition," harking to her philosophy background, and she uses this to combat the negative effects of didacticism.

Mills gave tips for both writing moral messages and writing overall in children's literature that also helped her in her writing. She quoted C.S. Lewis and said that the question authors need to ask is "What moral do I need?" Although authors try to focus on their audience when writing their stories, sometimes we forget that children are very keen and pick up on subtle or complex lessons and morals. When writing *Zero Tolerance*, which focuses on the story of Sierra and the aftermath of her accidentally bringing a knife to school in the wrong lunchbox, Mills said that she based the idea off of a news article and wanted to see how this affected Sierra. Following this, Mills said to not

be afraid to share truths about the world and life with children and write about ethical dilemmas that children experience on a daily basis (which, she pointed out, adults can experience as well). She also said to make sure that the moral grows organically in the story. The classic and always true "Show don't tell" writing advice is something she strongly advocated.

Mills said that is a far more compelling and interesting story when the character discovers truths on their own, rather than having an adult or authoritative figure give the character the lesson of the story, and she recommended *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes as a great example of this in practice. She left the audience by saying that writing the truth is the most important thing authors can do for children. Whatever the moral that appeals to the author, write it true, and you can't go wrong.



Claudia Mills lecturing on the dilemmas of didacticism

Eastern Holds Censorship Panel During Banned Books Week

By Meaghan McFall-Gorman

The subject of censorship is often a sensitive one, especially within the educational and literary realm. Educators believe in the freedom of information and the access to that same information, while writers and persons within the English discipline believe in the ability to write and read on any topics without restriction. Therefore censorship, to many, is an issue of limiting education, restricting literary knowledge, and even impeding free speech. As a future educator, and a student of English studies, I will have to face censorship in my career. Therefore, when the opportunity came to be a part of the censorship panel, I was eager to join and two other students, Cherie Green and Kristen Howe.

At first, our core beliefs to deny censorship seemed as though they would guide us to a topic on which to present. However, the interesting idea came to us to instead play devil's advocate – and essentially defend the censors.

This had every possibility of not being well received by an audience comprised of English and Education oriented individuals, or being taken as humorous, should we mock the reasons that people claim for censorship. However, as a group we decided to fairly and justly explain the reasoning behind censorship, and then highlight how this censoring may overlook the positive contributions stories can make in readers lives.

To shape the discussion to an audience which also included fellow classmates, our group discussed several books that were a part of our class Adolescent Literature taught by Dr. Lisa Rowe Fraustino. These books included *Speak* and *Weetzie Bat*, as well as the



Left to right: Dan Barret, Kara Gilbert, Dr. Lisa Rowe Fraustino, Hope Marie Cooke and Dr. Wendy Glenn

Harry Potter series by J.K Rowling in order to bring in a text which a vast majority of the literary world is familiar with.

Ultimately, while other speakers analyzed the legality of censorship, the struggle to overcome censorship, the right of teachers to choose literature for their students, our group strove to meet the academic and intellectual standards of Eastern as a liberal arts school.

The entire premise of a liberal education is to be well grounded in multiple areas of study, and to be open to new ideas and practices. Therefore it would be unfair and close minded to condemn all censorship, because without at least trying to understand the basis for their thoughts we have no grounds upon which to judge them.

Likewise, censors have no grounds to judge books they have not read or merely skimmed, and until both sides of this battle attempt to understand one another, it will continue.

Current Student Spotlight: Kelly Huhtanen

By Rachel Scrivano

Kelly Huhtanen, a junior at Eastern Connecticut State University, was selected for an internship opportunity with Dr. Clermont-Ferrand in the fall semester of 2015 after displaying an ability and interest in Middle English. Huhtanen, double majoring in English and Elementary Education, took Clermont-Ferrand's English course the semester prior to her internship. Clermont-Ferrand offered an extra credit assignment to utilize Twitter to tweet in Middle English about the famous deceased writer, Chaucer. "Dr. Clermont-Ferrand said that I had an aptitude for Middle English and social media, so she thought that I'd be a good fit [for the internship]," Huhtanen commented.

Huhtanen's internship, as the social media intern for the International Hoccleve Society, allows her to explore the benefits of modern technology in regards to popularizing Middle English works. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and a site called Storify all are used "to spark social media excitement," as Huhtanen puts it. Both Clermont-Ferrand and Huhtanen "tweet" regularly to an audience of over 500 followers, which include medieval scholars as well as Middle English enthusiasts. Huhtanen explained that she uses trending hashtags (#monsterproblems) and attaches Middle English commentary and humor to "get people interested in Thomas Hoccleve as well as the time period in which he existed." Interestingly enough, the two at times "tweet" Medieval manuscripts with Middle English captions to entertain their followers.

Aside from social media, which is a focal point of the internship, Huhtanen also helps to manage the International Hoccleve Society's newsletter. She is responsible for updating the newsletter to include new authors who have re-

cently written about Thomas Hoccleve. Additionally, Huhtanen is in charge of contacting individuals who are presenting at the Annual International Congress of Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo (usually just referred to as Kalamazoo) and those who have written about Hoccleve in order to collect information on them for the society's Instagram page.

With Huhtanen being an Elementary Education major, she found "Flat Hoccleve" a fun experience within the internship. "Flat Hoccleve," a parody of "Flat Stanley" (a childhood favorite literary class activity), was launched in order to enable a paper cutout of Thomas Hoccleve to travel around the globe. The goal is to publicize the society and spread love of Middle English. "Flat Hoccleve" is traveling as far as Australia! Huhtanen aspires to continue engaging with the International Hoccleve Society when she finishes her internship. Throughout her internship experience, Huhtanen says she has acquired new skills that she can use in her English and Education majors.

She highly recommends this internship to anyone interested in Middle English and Medieval times. The society is very passionate about Thomas Hoccleve, which makes the environment enjoyable and exciting. Huhtanen mentions that interns do not have to be skilled in Middle English, for Dr. Clermont-Ferrand will introduce the intern to Thomas Hoccleve's works and familiarize them with the language and time period.

If you would like to check out the Hoccleve Twitter account, you can do so by tweeting @THoccleve. Dr. Clermont-Ferrand will be looking for interns next year that might be interested in this opportunity. Please notify Dr. Clermont-Ferrand through her email, clermontm@easternct.edu, if you would like more information.



Huhtanen holding "Flat Hoccleve"

New Developments for the Eastern Writers Guild

By Dakota Dolan



Members of the Writers Guild

The Eastern Writers Guild has enjoyed such a fun, exciting, and busy fall this semester. The Guild held three terrific coffee houses, each filled with music, poetry, laughter, and even some impromptu plays (and of course plenty of free coffee). These coffee houses are so important to our mission as a club, it's just amazing what happens when creative peers are brought together to share their work in a place without pretentiousness or judgment.

We also continued our commitment to helping bring brilliant and talented writers to campus to hold readings and workshop. This semester, with the help of the Visiting Writers Series and the English Department, we were fortunate enough to have the poets Paul Martin and Maria Mazziotti Gillan come to Eastern and teach and talk about their experiences writing. Both impressed on us the importance of writing what *you* need to write.

But what The Writers Guild is, perhaps, most excited about are the new initiatives we are beginning for *Eastern Exposure* next semester. First and foremost, we hope to submit the *Exposure* for consideration in the AWP: National Program Directors Prize. This is a set of two awards given out annually by the Association of Writers & Writing Programs to out-

standing undergraduate magazines. The awards are in two different categories, one for content, and one for design. We hope that by beginning a tradition of entering the magazine for this prize that it will become an annual part of the creation of the magazine, and that as we grow and improve it will give us goal to reach toward.

Finally, thanks to the encouraging words and a generous donation by one of the visiting poets, Paul Martin, we are experimenting with a new internal award for the magazine. The Guild will be starting what we hope to be a new tradition of selecting two pieces, one prose and one poetry, to receive "Best of" awards in the magazine. They will receive special recognition in the magazine itself and modest prizes will be given out to the authors at the release party for the *Exposure*.

We are very excited about all the things that are happening with The Writers Guild and *Eastern Exposure* this year and we can't wait until we get back from break and can start sharing all of our hard work with everyone again. Until then, if you are interested in joining the Writers Guild or in anything else I mentioned you can contact us at, easternwriters@my.easternct.edu or on our facebook page, Eastern Writers Guild. Happy writing!

Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Holly Ryan

By Quinn McAdam

Have you ever thought about student awareness of the writing center on a college campus? Dr. Holly Ryan, an Eastern alumni who graduated with a degree in English in 2001, certainly has, and she has brought new information on the subject to light.

After graduating from Eastern, Dr. Ryan went on to complete her Master's degree and Ph.D. at the University of Arizona. Now, she is the director of the University of Pennsylvania, Berks writing center, Dr. Ryan saw a problem and aimed to find a solution. She found herself visiting many classrooms to introduce more students to the writing center. Not only was it time consuming, but she also started to ask herself if it was effective and if there was another way that would relay the information more clearly.

Her writing center is peer-run, meaning that there are new tutors as students begin and end their time at the university. Essentially, Dr. Ryan is the only member of the writing center consistently there for an extended period of time, so she thought it important to be the one who made students aware of the opportunities within the writing center.

She composed a study with Dr. Danielle Kane, who aided in the statistics piece, and they came up with a study that would enforce different methods of awareness among students followed by a survey to gauge how effective each method was.

They used different "interventions" to do so. The first



Dr. Holly Ryan

group of classes were the control group, which got the standard presentation by Dr. Ryan about the writing center. The second group of classes listened to an informational podcast created by fellow students, and the third received a demonstration by Dr. Ryan and peers about how the writing center works. Following the demonstration, students were asked to write down a few things they learned about the writing center, and then Dr. Ryan continued to answer any remaining questions.

When the surveys were complete, the demonstration proved the most successful intervention in getting students to be aware of and potentially come to the writing center.

It is important to note while her results were not statistically significant due to small sample size, the study says a lot about what works for students and what does not.

Dr. Ryan mentioned that the demonstration also took the most time, even compared to the original informational presentation, but it was the most effective as well.

She hopes to continue this study to see if a demonstration on video will provide the same results.

Dr. Holly Ryan has delved into the subject of writing center awareness on campus, and she plans to continue her study further to find more results and to make the ultimate importance of a writing center's presence at a university known.

Poet Paul Martin Reads at Eastern

By Jacqueline Stone



Humes and Martin at a writing workshop with students

On Wednesday, September 30, the Eastern Writers Guild and the English Department hosted an event where notable author Paul Martin honored students by reading some of his most renowned poems about his early childhood spent in Eastern Pennsylvania alongside the Lehigh River.

He also touched upon his heritage and his parents, who originally were from Czechoslovakia, and their influence on his writings. Harry Humes, author of *Bottomland*, made a special appearance to the event in support for Martin, who is a close friend.

Martin dived right into the readings. However, instead of reciting one of his own pieces of work to begin, he read "From the Apple Tree," a poem by Harry Humes. Humes started out as Martin's mentor whom he drew inspiration from. Thus, he wanted to honor Humes for pushing him into shape whenever he doubted himself and his potential.

Martin went on to read three poems about school in order to connect with his audience. Then he read seven other poems that he's written over the years and five from his book, *Floating on the Lehigh*. The poem "Note to a Passerby" was specifically requested

by a student to read, which Martin did enthusiastically. Each poem taken from his life, as he grew up, all personally attached to a moment that impacted him. Martin stated, "Writing... it calls for you to pay attention to life. I don't understand why everyone doesn't write. Life just keeps coming and coming..."

During the question and answer session, many questions veered towards the inspiration Martin builds to create such great poems.

One question asked by a student was, "Do you like everything you've written?" Martin laughed out the response, "No! When I was deciding in my hotel room what I should read, everything suddenly looked pale!" His humor and quick-witted response had many students perking up to speak.

The last question asked if there are any specific people who inspire him and he answered, "A lot of people from my own culture. I still love the old ladies who wear babushkas." Martin concluded the session with one last reading of a poem entitled "A Different House," a poem describing growing up in a Czechoslovakia speaking household, which was requested by Dr. Daniel Donaghy, a professor here at Eastern.

Author Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel Visits Eastern

By Kelly Huhtanen



Zobel with Dr. James's Native American Literature class

On September 24, 2015, author Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel visited Dr. Meredith James's Native American Literature course. The class read Zobel's book *Wabanaki Blues*. During her visit Zobel gave insight into Native American culture and spoke about her book.

Zobel is both a non-fiction and fiction writer who writes about the lives of Native Americans in New England. In addition to this responsibility, she is also the Medicine Woman as well as the Tribal Historian for the Mohegan Tribe.

She has taken an active role within her tribal community, receiving training from her great-aunt, Medicine Woman Dr. Gladys Tantaquidgeon, regarding tribal oral tradition and spiritual beliefs. Tantaquidgeon Zobel's writing on Native issues has been recognized as far back as 1992; she has been writing in this genre for a considerable portion of her life. Her most recent work is *Wabanaki Blues*, which has gained a significant amount of popularity.

Not only has her work become important to her readers, it has also become significant in the larger canon of Native American literature. While at Eastern, she responded to why she believes the writing of this novel was important as well as why she made certain artistic choices with regards to the novel's cover art.

Within the larger canon of Native American literature, *Wabanaki Blues* has a crucial role. This role is to provide Natives with relatable literature. *Wabanaki Blues* is a novel rooted in young adult fiction and is written in a way that other Native American literature typically is not. This difference in location could mean a

lot for a young Native struggling with their identities.

There are not many books in existence that address certain Native experiences that Tantaquidgeon Zobel was familiar with; this is what inspired her to write. When she didn't find books that correlated with her experiences within her tribe and with her familial beliefs, she began writing herself.

While at Eastern, Tantaquidgeon Zobel said that she was having fun writing in the young adult genre because it has yet to be fully explored within the context of Native American literature. She mentioned multiple times that she felt accomplished when she could help young Natives find themselves in literature. However, she also loves writing to inform non-Natives of Native American culture.

The most noteworthy question that was asked regarding artistic choice concerned the "stereotypical [typically western] Native look" of the girl on the cover. Tantaquidgeon Zobel's reaction was not what the majority of the class had expected. She replied that there were no stereotypical Native American appearances and agreed that the creator changed Native American appearances with the seasons. Sometimes the creator makes Native people white as snow, other times he does not. Although there may be a typical appearance of Native people in the West, she knows Native Americans that look like all of the representations that we have seen.

Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel is an excellent Native writer who shared many cultural insights. We learned not only her opinions regarding the topics that she wrote about, but also why she felt her writing was necessary.

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Lauren Rosenberg

By Seth McCulloch

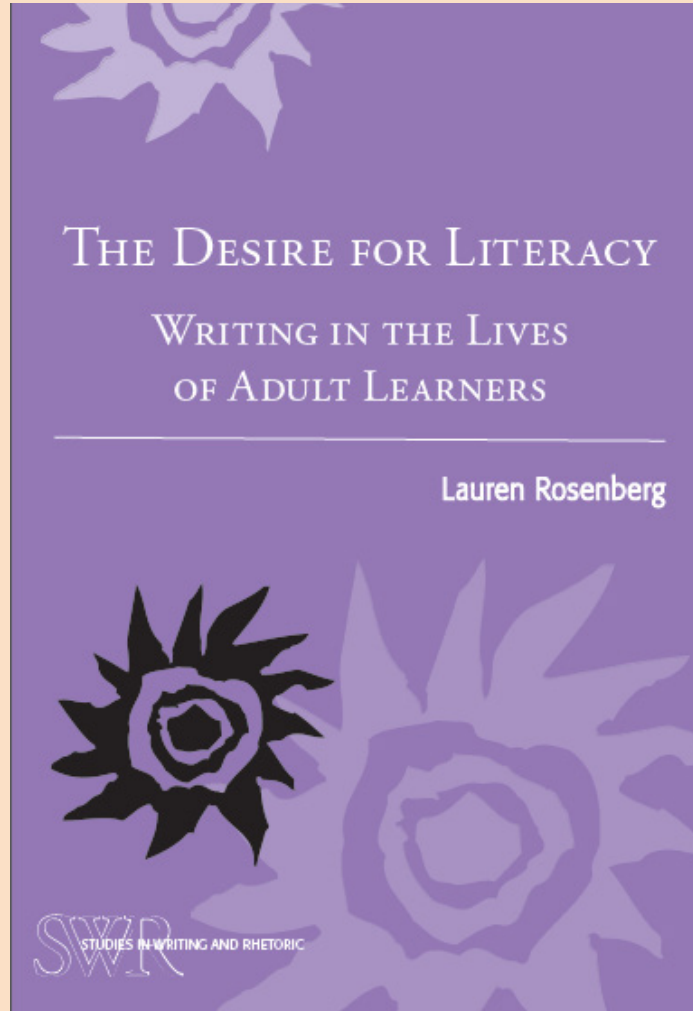
Dr. Lauren Rosenberg, an esteemed professor of English at Eastern, has recently published a book that she has been working on for several years. The book, *The Desire for Literacy: Writing in the Lives of Adult Learners*, is a qualitative study that focuses on four adult learners who are seeking to obtain literacy.

Rosenberg's interest in literacy studies is not new. Originally, Rosenberg focused on literacy issues for her dissertation and had worked as a literacy tutor for many years.

"I started out working as a literacy tutor in Bridgeport for a woman who was completely nonliterate. She was from Haiti and had a lot of issues with forms. She couldn't remember things like how to spell Bridgeport for example. I started getting interested in how a lot of people do not have access to literacy. Later, when I was in grad school, I connected with a woman whom I worked with for five years; she was Korean and had a lot of baggage surrounding literacy, especially writing. There were a lot of collisions with wanting to study, from wanting to read and write. She had these competing desires to become more literate and from wanting to push it away."

For Rosenberg, her study focuses mainly on what motivations exist for someone to obtain literacy outside of an academic setting. Why would someone become more literate of his or her own accord? Is it simply to give themselves greater credentials; or is there a greater underlying reason as to why someone would pursue becoming literate?

"I went into the study thinking that maybe they want to make up for a lack. I think it is a lot more than that. There are all kinds of different things that people want their literacy for. For Violeta and Chief, they



Dr. Lauren Rosenberg's book

have used their literacy to become activists in their communities. Violeta has become a spokesperson in her community, particularly for Latina women with HIV. She wants to harness her literacy and use it for activist purposes," said Rosenberg.

In the United States, there is a large stigma against the inability to read and write. Nonliterate people often experience shame and discomfort because of their illiteracy. Literate individuals will also, at times, use their literacy as a tool against nonliterate people. For instance, literate individuals might ask nonliterate people to read something in an attempt to embarrass them by exploiting their nonliteracy.

"The biggest misconception that people tend to have is that if someone cannot read, that means that they aren't intelligent. The people at the literacy center talk about this all the time, that if people can't read that means they're dumb-- that they are inherently lesser."

Moreover, when one thinks of a nonliterate person, a common assumption is that they are either an early language learner or a non-native English speaker. However, as Rosenberg states, this is certainly not the case. "People assume that I work with immigrants. All of the people in my study are U.S. Citizens. We think that everyone has access to the same education, but the study shows that it simply isn't true. A quality and free education is available to some people, but not to all people."

What is perhaps the largest takeaway from Rosenberg's book is that it focuses on a population that few have the opportunity to learn about. In the United States, many have the firm belief that everyone receives the same primary education. However, what we fail to see is that there are many individuals who are not as fortunate or privileged as the majority.

Professor Lisa Taylor Wins New Works Competition

By Seth McCulloch

During May, 2015, creative writing professor Lisa Taylor won the 2015 Hugo House New Works Competition. For the competition, submitters were asked to produce an original piece of short fiction that was no more than 1,000 words. Her winning story, *Mosaic*, included an impressive amount of character development and had an ending that, as final judge for the New Works Competition Joan Leegant stated, “packs a punch.”

As any writer knows, writing in a specific style or for particular requirements can be quite difficult. “The submission had to be 1,000 words or less and had to take place in the span of an hour,” said Taylor.

Taylor’s story *Mosaic* follows a quirky couple whose worlds are shaken when they find themselves experiencing the terrors that are involved with an earthquake. The ending of *Mosaic* is ambiguous, a trademark of Taylor’s writing style. Taylor strives to allow writers to make their own interpretations about the ending. What one reader may take away from a piece could vary greatly from another reader.

As part of her prize, Taylor had the opportunity to interview Meg Wolitzer, author of six novels, which include *The Interestings*, *The Uncoupling*, and *The Ten-Year Nap*. In addition to reading her piece alongside Wolitzer, Taylor read together with writers Justin Torres and Amelia Gray.



Professor Lisa Taylor

Though she has published several poetry collections, Taylor is also a writer of fiction. “The process of writing fiction and poetry differ because to me, poetry is sort of my internal landscape and fiction is purely a work of imagination. It starts when a character comes to me. I always start with the character. I really love surprise in fiction and I really love having my characters reveal something that you wouldn’t expect. I don’t think of life as being neat, so stories shouldn’t be neat.”

For aspiring writers, Taylor suggests they “read as much as possible and read diverse literature. People might want to choose

literature from around the globe to gain a more inclusive viewpoint. I’ve been teaching college for a long time and I have found that when people find an author that they like, they tend to stick with them. People should also read from all over the world in order to get a perspective that’s different than what they’re used to.”

If anyone is unfamiliar with Lisa C. Taylor’s writing, her latest book is *Growing a New Tail*, a collection of eighteen short stories released in November by Syracuse University Press in the U.S. and Arlen House Press in Ireland. Check her web site for upcoming local readings and for additional information on her upcoming works www.lisactaylor.com.

Poet Maria Mazziotti Gillan Visits Eastern

By Jacqueline Stone



Maria Mazziotti Gillan during her poetry reading

On Wednesday, November 19, Eastern Connecticut State University had the honor to host Maria Mazziotti Gillan, author and poet, to share some of her poetry in the science building on campus. Dokota Dolan, president of the Eastern Writers Guild, did a wonderful job in introducing the authors many attributes to writing over the years before the reading began.

Gillan read over a dozen of her poems during the course of the hour-long reading, the first being “Growing up Italian.” Before starting Gillan stated, “We all have a story to tell. I was trying to write a guide to give students like you courage.” Gillan hoped that even though the poem was about being Italian, she wished the audience would relate to their own heritage.

Among the many moments that left an impression on Gillan, thus leading her to write about them, were those captured in “When I Was a Young Girl,” “What I Can’t Face about Someone I Love,” and “After My Reading in New York City.” Gillan told the audience, “The books I remember best are the ones that made me cry, laugh, or made the hair on the back of my neck stand.” Throughout the reading, many of the listeners were enthralled by Gillan’s words, laughing

out loud or whispering to their neighbor as something they heard related back to them in some way.

After the reading, Gillan answered questions from the audience, giving more tips and knowledge to aspiring writers. When asked to describe her writing process, Gillan explained, “It depended on what I was reading since that would trigger my own writing. Sylvia Plath and other women writers really helped.” Another student wanted to know how long it takes her to revise her works, and Gillan replied with, “A lot. I’m a compulsive reviser. But I tell people to get the first draft out before you start revising. Don’t take all the heart out of the poem.” A student who wonders how Gillan gets her thought down on paper asked the last question. Gillan answered with, “You’re thinking with your mind and not your heart. We all have experiences we have to talk about. You need to be able to let go and express.”

Gillan was well received by the audience and stayed afterwards for a signing, which was a great opportunity for people to interact with the author personally. Thanks to the English Department and Dr. Daniel Donaghy for sponsoring such a successful event as part of Eastern’s visiting author series..

Current Student Spotlight: Mae Ehrnfelt

By Lily Vu

Over the summer, Eastern's very own Mae Ehrnfelt, a senior pursuing a Bachelors of Arts in English and Women and Gender Studies, along with a minor in writing, scored an internship with Shmoop. For those who don't know, Shmoop is, according to its own website, "a credible academic resource written by educators and experts from America's top universities, including Stanford, Harvard, and UC Berkeley." Mae was asked to "Shmoop" Eastern, giving the university its very own "About me" profile, informing readers of what Eastern is all about. Mae's article covers things about Eastern such as on campus dormitories, student population, location, clubs, and nearly all things that any senior in high school would like to know before applying to attend university.



Mae Ehrnfelt

One thing that Mae encountered while writing for Shmoop is their little to no recognizing of student writers. Although Mae's article was published online and she received a payment of \$50 for it, her name is never mentioned as the author of the article. Mae would like to urge Shmoop to recognize students that write these articles: "If potential students are looking into Eastern's profile on Shmoop, it might be more appealing to them if they know who wrote the profile – maybe they could even get in contact with the writer to learn more about the school and to build a mentor-mentee relationship," said Mae. However, this experience did give Mae a taste of what the professional world of writing is like.

An editor from Shmoop reached out to Department Chair Dr. Lisa Rowe Fraustino in search of potential staff writers and "since I had previously worked as an editorial and social media intern with her, she recommended me" said Mae. Mae herself didn't even know what Shmoop was, but after exchanging multiple emails with the editor, she found that "it had many useful resources for college students. Shmoop is unique in a sense that there is no other website that highlights colleges and universities through a student's perspective."

When asked if she thought she accurately represented Eastern in her article, Mae stated "I highlighted the amazing academic and professional opportunities that Eastern offers, but I felt it was also important to talk about the more fun, extracurricular side of the college experience as well." Shmoop has given a student at Eastern an amazing opportunity to showcase her writing talent and student perspective of her university – her words are now published online for all that are interested in Eastern to see. If you are interested in reading Mae's article, you can read it here: www.shmoop.com/eastern-connecticut-state-university/

ENG 487: Graduate School Portfolio Prep

By Seth McCulloch

Each Fall semester, Dr. Maureen McDonnell offers a course designed to help students make the necessary steps towards completing all of the requirements necessary for graduate applications. ENG 487: Graduate School Portfolio Preparation seeks to aid students with constructing effective graduate portfolios that will better their chance of getting into the graduate program they most want to get into.

The decision on whether or not to go to graduate school is one that many college students struggle with as they

enter into their junior and senior years. Many students, especially first generation college students, may feel lost when it comes to graduate applications. The choice to go to graduate school often comes with a lot of questions. What is a statement of purpose? Do I have to take the GRE for the program I wish to apply to? How do I find graduate programs? What program is a good program?

ENG 487 is a 2-credit course, which means that it ends in mid-October. It can also be used towards one of the required elective spaces for the English major. If you are considering going to graduate school, be sure to not miss out on this opportunity!

English at Work: Eastern Alumni Panel

By Luisa Florez



From left to right: Sniffin, D'Angelo, McBride, Kus

On December 7, 2015, Eastern Connecticut State University's English Department held their "English at Work: Panel Discussion by Visiting Alumni." The English Department welcomed four guest speakers: Megan Sniffin, Reece D'Angelo, Turquoise McBride, and Ashley Kus, all are Eastern alumni that majored in English and currently work in a variety of different professional fields.

The event began with moderators Seth McCulloch and Lily Vu asking the four panelists to give a brief introduction of who they are and what they are currently doing. Sniffin, D'Angelo, McBride, and Kus, who are now working as a residence coordinator, as an applicant advisor, as a member of Connecticut's Department of Social Services, and as a journalist for *The Berlin Citizen* respectively, were asked to attend the panel by English Department Chairperson Dr. Lisa Rowe Fraustino.

The opening question asked panelists to explain how they felt that English was a versatile field. McBride, who now works for the state government stated, "English is limitless." The panelists each emphasized that the skills that a BA in English provides will be found in any profession.

Kus said that her English BA gave her fundamental knowledge, including fast reading skills, the ability to write quickly, and research skills. Especially in her career as a journalist, reading, writing, research, and editing are essential.

During the panel, McCulloch and Vu asked the panelists a series of questions that focused on how the panelists were applying their English degrees. As many English majors know, they are commonly asked the

question, "What are you going to do after you graduate?" By showing young English majors the versatility of the degree, the English Department sought to help remove the misconception that all you can do with English is teach.

As the panel wrapped up, the alumni gave suggestions for the students on how to network. Sniffin, who received her M.F.A. from Hofstra University, suggested that the most important aspect of networking that one should take into consideration, is that it is not only the "little face-to-face moment, but most important is the follow-up." She emphasized that it is important to always stay in touch with people with whom you build connections.

D'Angelo shared "networking's authenticity." She suggested that first one must develop a relationship before asking for a favor. Additionally, she gave a piece of advice; once you have a business card, "write on the back how you met them and one fact about them." She continued by saying that this helps you, and them, remember how you met.

McBride encouraged students to take advantage of the college experience as "[becoming] part of E-Board [and/or] volunteering." She stated that by doing so, it would show that you are stepping out and taking full advantage of the opportunities.

Lastly, Kus shared that LinkedIn has been "very helpful" for her. Emailing also helps make a personal connection with the individual whom you are reaching out to.

Eastern gives a big thank you to the visiting alumni for coming out to share their stories and experiences with the students. They gave great motivation to the undergrad English majors and showed some of the many ways that we can apply our English degrees.

Dr. Mama Speaks at University Hour Event

By Ryan King

On Oct. 28, storyteller and Eastern Connecticut State University English professor Raouf Mama spoke to students about his recently published memoir, *Fortune's Favorite Child*.

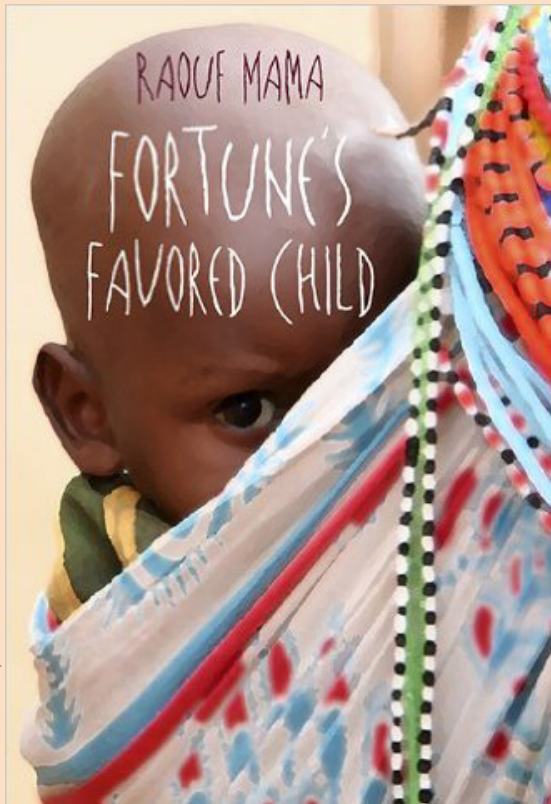
Mama opened his lecture by reading an excerpt from his memoir and talking about his upbringing. For the first 20 years of his life, he lived a normal existence in Benin, West Africa.

It wasn't until he became ill, suffering from constant headaches and an inability to sleep, that he was finally able to discover his identity. Unable to deal with his illness, he traveled to a healer who performed

a ritual that Mama could only describe as a miracle. "When the ritual was finished, the healer told us that I suffered not from a sickness of the body but from a sickness of the spirit. 'The boy's spirit yearns for his real father, he continued'"

Unbeknownst to Mama, the time surrounding his birth had been stressful and traumatic for his family, almost resulting in his death before he was a week old.

Ultimately, his mother gave him up for adoption. The



Dr. Raouf Mama's book

adoption prevented him from meeting his biological father until he was an adult, but Mama described the event as the most beautiful moment of his life. Although it was stressful for him, Mama has taken away many positives from the time before he met his father.

"Those 20 years made me a better person because I'm more keenly aware of what it's like to feel unwanted or unloved," he explained.

"You can't sleepwalk your way through life. You have to find something to be excited about, something to be passionate about. Most importantly, everyone should have a sense of excitement about life," Mama said as he tried to convey to students that we are all "fortune's favored children."

He also urged students to form lasting bonds and work together with each other, stating that it is only possible to achieve great things with the help of others. It is through collaboration and togetherness that we can continue to progress together.

"We all have one chance to make a difference, to bring joy where there is sadness, and that chance is today," Mama said. "Yesterday has already passed and tomorrow is out of reach; there will never be a better chance than today."

A Successful Semester for Sigma Tau Delta

By Catherine Allegretti

Sigma Tau Delta is Eastern Connecticut State University's chapter for the English Honors Society. This year, Eastern's chapter is not only focusing on social events for members, but also on ways to better the community. The club is supporting the Better World Books fundraiser and asking for new and used textbooks to be donated to help provide textbooks for those in need. In addition, the club's bake sale raised over \$60 that will go toward future events.

On Thursday, October 29, 2015 Sigma Tau Delta hosted its first event of the semester, Nostalgia Night, geared toward celebrating a love of literature from our childhood. Held in the curriculum center of the library, students were able to read some of their favorite classics and enjoy snacks while they reminisced on the past. With induction night around the corner, the

chapter, led by faculty advisor Dr. Allison Speicher, hoped to generate interest in the club and meet the new members. Over 20 students attended and many who were not members of Sigma Tau Delta. "Our biggest goal of the year is to appeal to those outside of the club," said Meaghan McFall-Gorman, president-Sigma Tau Delta. "We want everyone to realize what a great club Sigma Tau Delta is and that it extends to more than just English majors."

On Dec. 9, 2015 at English Night the new group of Sigma Tau Delta members were inducted. "We were pleased to induct 21 new members who meet our high standards for academic achievement, including an impressive 3.5 GPA in their English coursework," Speicher said. "It was especially exciting to see so many friends and family members attend English Night to applaud these students' accomplishments."

Fall 2015 English Night



The Fall 2015 Sigma Tau Delta inductees

By Seth McCullock

On December 9, Eastern Connecticut State University's English Department presented English Night in the Paul E. Johnson Room. The night included the presentation of two scholarships, the 2015 Sigma Tau Delta honor society induction ceremony and senior seminar presentations.

The first scholarship awarded by the department was the Constance Campo Scholarship, which is given to a non-traditional English student. The Constance Campo Scholarship was established in memory of Constance Campo, a former member of the English Department faculty. It is awarded annually to a student who demonstrates excellence in his or her studies while also showcasing sensitivity towards issues of diversity and gender, as Campo did. The scholarship was awarded to Tammy DeGennaro who was noted by the English Department Chairperson Dr. Lisa Rowe Fraustino to have, "demonstrated tact and thoughtfulness while dealing with the delicate issues of race and gender."

Secondly, the David and Janet Philips Scholarship, is awarded annually to a student who majors in English and is also active in the university's literary magazine *The Eastern Exposure*, the university's newspaper *The Campus Lantern*, or in theatre. The scholarship was awarded to Megan Velasquez. Velasquez, who is a double major in English and Theatre, and has been involved in over ten of Eastern's Theatre Department's productions.

Afterwards, members from Sigma Tau Delta took the stage for the induction ceremony. A total of eighteen inductees were in attendance for the ceremony. In order to be inducted into the honor society, students must first maintain a 3.5 cumulative G.P.A. in English; receive two recommendations from faculty members who feel

that the student's coursework, ability, and work ethic are deserving of the distinction; and students must also demonstrate a commitment to the field of English study. Inductees were introduced by chapter President Meaghan McFall-Gorman and Vice-President Seth McCullock. They were officially welcomed into the honor society when chapter sponsor Dr. Allison Speicher gave inductees their certificates and cords.

Following a brief intermission for refreshments, the event picked up with the senior seminar presentations. The first presenters were members of Dr. Christopher Torockio's seminar *A Crash Course in the Novel*. In this class, students were tasked with writing a complete novel in just a semester and a half. From conceptualization to finished product, each student was able to complete a finished piece.

Torockio noted how the writing process is oftentimes filled with self-doubt and can prove to be extremely challenging, especially for those who have never written something as long as a novel before. Students Stephanie Catucci, Kevin McVane, and Alison Newhall each read excerpts from their works.

The next seminar was Dr. Meredith Clermont-Ferrand's *The Dirty Sexy Middle Ages*. According to Clermont-Ferrand, there is a common notion that literature from the Middle Ages and the Medieval Period is highly focused around the Catholic Church and is both dull and dry. The seminar largely focused on analyzing fabliaux, which are short stories that are very often filled with innuendo and humor. Students Danielle Draeger and Kamila Nowak presented for the seminar.

The event concluded with a brief question and answer section where audience members were given the opportunity to ask student presenters about their work.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Ryan King is a senior majoring in English and minoring in Writing.

Kelly Huhtanen is a junior majoring in English and Elementary Education.

Quinn McAdam is a freshman majoring in English.

Luisa Florez is a sophomore majoring in English and minoring in Spanish.

Seth McCulloch is a senior majoring in English and Communication and minoring in Writing.

Meaghan McFall-Gorman is a junior majoring in English and Secondary Education and minoring in Political Science.

Meet the Spring 2016 English Department Interns!

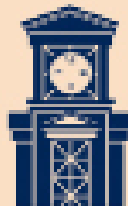
Fatima Kazmi is a senior at Eastern. She is an English major and a Writing minor. She will be taking over as the English Department's social media intern. Fatima's interests concerning English are multifaceted. She said, "I am committed to the AmeriCorps program, Jump Start which helps preschool children get ready for kindergarten. After graduation I am looking forward to committing myself to the "Teach For America" program. I aspire to strengthen educational equity for all."

Ashley Cholewa is a junior at Eastern. She is an English major in the Honors Program, and is also studying for certification in Secondary Education. When asked about taking over the position of editor of Keep-ENG in Touch, Ashley said, "I think it will be a challenge, but a rewarding one. I am excited to begin work creating a newsletter that will live up to the high standard of previous issues."

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