Celebrating English Alumnus’ Rare Gift

On April 14, 2016, the Gumberg library held a special event in honor of the re-opening of its rare books collection reading room. Titled “Of Enduring Value: Rare Books at Duquesne University,” the exhibition brought together librarians, professors, students, and local media to admire and learn about some of Duquesne’s most interesting rare books, including the new gem of Duquesne’s collection: a 1611 edition of Spenser’s The Faerie Queene. This rare and beautiful book was donated by Dr. Robert M. Giannetti, an alumnus of the English Department’s Ph.D. program. At the event, the English Department’s Dr. Danielle St. Hilaire provided the audience with some background on the poem, after which Dr. Giannetti gave a moving tribute, with readings from the poem and from a piece of his own poetry, to the importance of rare books and the study of older literatures. Thanks to Dr. Giannetti’s generous gift, students at Duquesne will now be able to view this early edition of this significant and unusual poem in the Gumberg Library—that is, once it has returned from “touring” West Virginia with Shakespeare’s First Folio.

The event, organized by University Librarian Dr. Sara Baron, was also attended by Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reporter Marylynne Pitz, who published an excellent write-up about the event: http://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2016/04/16/Duquesne-acquires-rare-work/stories/201604160006

Doctoral Graduate Christine Cusick Receives Fellowship in Ireland

During my time as a Duquesne graduate student, I had the privilege to work with gifted teachers and scholars who supported my interdisciplinary research and who enacted for me the deep value of a supportive research and teaching community. I try to bring this ethos to my work in the classroom and on the page.

As a part of my first sabbatical, I held the honor of a Moore Institute Visiting Fellow at the National University of Galway, an experience that recalls for me how fortunate I am to find my way to intellectual circles that value the social relevance of our work.

The Moore Institute for Research in the Humanities and the Social Sciences is an international community that brings together researchers who are committed to multi-disciplinary dialogue and conversation. I collaborated with a faculty member from The Centre for Irish Studies at NUI Galway, conducted archival research at the James Hardiman Library, and enjoyed conversations with students and scholars whose experiences enlivened and enriched my understanding of a dynamic research area.

I was most grateful to the Institute for hosting a launch for my newly released coedited essay collection. In this gathering, faculty, students, and staff joined community members of Galway City and Connemara to celebrate a collection that honors the work of cartographer and writer Tim Robinson. One of our primary aims of the collection was to create a study that bridges the chasm between academic and community activism. For me, this gathering of poets, scholars, environmental educators, and community members was hope for what we

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might aim to more thoughtfully achieve as teachers, researchers, and human animals of the natural world. My time at NUI Galway was brought to a close with a public lecture on my research.

Given the current challenges that academia faces, I know that opportunities such as my experience abroad are rare. I feel blessed by this time and hope that I can carry its fruit into my classroom and onto the blank page in the same way that I carry my time at Duquesne with me in every working hour.

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**Alumni Updates**

*Katie Calano (M.A. 2015)* accepted an English teaching position at Upper St. Clair School District after teaching at Grove City High School for 5 years.

*Cara Cilano (Ph.D. 2000)* accepted the position of English Department Chair at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

*Shayne Confer (Ph.D. 2009)* accepted the position of Acting Chair of the English Department at Union College in Barbourville, KY. He was also elected Vice President of the Kentucky Philological Association.

*Robert Craven (M.A. 2015)* accepted a graduate teaching fellowship at the University of Oregon English Ph.D. program for Fall 2016. He will study ecocriticism.

*Justin Kishbaugh (Ph.D. 2014)* accepted a position as the Legal Writing Consultant at Roger Williams University in Providence, RI.

*Laurie McMillian (Ph.D. 2004)* accepted the position of Department of English and Modern Language Studies Chair at Pace University in Pleasantville, NY.

*Emily Rutter (Ph.D. 2014)* presented “‘Straighten Up and Fly Right’: A Contrafactual Reading of Percival Everett’s Suder and Bernard Malamud’s *The Natural*” at The Sultans of Swing Conference: 100 Years of Baseball, Jazz, and Short Fiction (Wright State University, April 2016). A full–length article with the same title is forthcoming in *Aethlon: The Journal of the Sport Literature*.

*Elizabeth Savage (Ph.D. 1998)* had a new chapbook just released by Dancing Girl Press titled *Purallax.* In March, her poem “Pacific” won this year’s Denise Levertov Prize. Also very happily, Fairmont State University named her the 2016 recipient of the William A. Boram Award for Teaching Excellence.


*Matthew Vickless (Ph.D. 2015)* accepted a position in December 2015 as a board member for the non-profit Central Penn College Education Foundation. He was unanimously nominated by the current trustees who were impressed by his student–centered teaching philosophy and approach to first–generation students. Matthew will work with the other trustees over his term to help provide education and scholarship opportunities to deserving Central Penn College students.

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**Careers in Academia Panel**

On April 8 the Duquesne English Department brought four talented alumni back to campus to celebrate their successes and discuss the transition from Ph.D. student to career academic. *Emily Rutter* (Ph.D. 2014), Assistant Professor of English (Diverse Literatures) at Ball State University, *Elizabeth Savage* (Ph.D. 1998), Professor of 19th and 20th century American literature at Fairmont State University, *Jeff Stoyanoff* (Ph.D. 2015), Assistant Professor of medieval literature at Spring Hill College, and *Kristianne Kalata Vaccaro* (Ph.D. 2008), Associate Professor of Victorian literature at Westminster College provided a holistic view of life in the academy and discussed best practices for graduate students and early career faculty. A dynamic discussion revealed that the alumni were grateful for the dedicated mentorship of Duquesne faculty and the lively community fostered by the English Graduate Organization.

Alumni also advised students to practice time management in anticipation of the demands on full-time faculty, and discussed how service can both enrich the academic experience and take time away from scholarly and pedagogical pursuits. When asked what they wish they had done more of while at Duquesne, alumni encouraged students to pursue innovative programs. Dr. Rutter spoke highly of her experience in the Learning Communities, noting the positive impact these interdisciplinary programs had on her job candidacy, and Dr. Stoyanoff observed that teaching UCOR 102 allowed him to design innovative literature classes on subjects/themes of his choosing. A reception following the panel provided an opportunity for networking and celebration. We are grateful to Drs. Rutter, Savage, Stoyanoff, and Vaccaro for their attendance and excellent advice, and pleased that the event gave us an opportunity to reflect on the smart and supportive community of which we are a part.
Ph.D.s: Not Just for Academia

Although it might sound surprising, an M.A. or Ph.D. in English can prepare you well for jobs outside of the university. This was the message of the March 17 “Careers in Media” panel jointly sponsored by the Department of English and Department of Journalism and Multimedia Arts (JMA). At the event, three accomplished women at different stages of their careers told Duquesne English and JMA students about other career paths, and how they can prepare themselves for those careers while still in school.

Lois Raimondo, a former Washington Post and New York Times reporter and photographer who currently holds the Shott Chair in Journalism at West Virginia University, described how her M.A. in Chinese literature and culture prepared her to report on the Dalai Lama’s exile from Tibet and the early days of the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Critical thinking—the ability to quickly and accurately take in facts and ideas, weigh their credibility, and make decisions—is a key part of a humanities education, she stressed, and it was crucial in her work.

Digital media is a great place for a Ph.D., Slate.com staff writer Rebecca Onion asserted. Graduate students learn to condense large amounts of information down to its key ideas, a skill also fundamental to writing for digital environments. Lindsay Albracht, a Duquesne English M.A. currently completing her Ph.D. at the City University of New York, echoed this. Albracht served as the intern for the popular podcast “The Culture Gabfest,” and in that position she had to collect and review dozens, even hundreds, of sources of information and opinion every week in order to give the podcast hosts what they needed to know.

All of the panelists agreed that their advanced degrees were helps, not hindrances, in their nonacademic jobs and careers and urged current students to think deliberately about how to hone their critical thinking and reading and communications skills not just for scholarly or pedagogical work but for a wide variety of applications.

Faculty Updates

Faith Barrett presented “The Penfield Extra: Editing War Poems in an Amateur Print Newspaper” for the Civil War caucus at the Midwest MLA in Columbus, OH last November. She also presented “‘Like Garnet, and Douglass, and Delany too’: Constituting the Abolitionist Community in the Scrapbooks of Amos Gerry Berman” for C-19 Society for Nineteenth Century Americanists in State College, PA in March. She also presented “Becoming Animal in the Work of Leslie Scalapino” for POETICS: The Next 23 Years in Buffalo, NY in April.

Laura Engel presented “‘A Flattered Picture’: Frances Burney, Portraiture, Fashion, and the Eighteenth-Century Marketplace” for the Modern Language Association Conference in Austin, TX in January.

John Fried presented “Furrers, Fairies, and Fetuses: When Earnestness Derails the Short Story” for the Association of Writers and Writing Programs in Los Angeles, CA in April.

Anna Gibson presented “Forming Towards Form in the Victorian Novel” for the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies Conference in Asheville, NC in March. She also presented “How We Read Novel Form: Victorian Seriality, Form, and Formation” for the American Comparative Literature Association Conference in Boston, MA in March.

Susan Howard presented “Parading the Royal Brand: Terracing as Political Tool and Social Spectacle in the Reign of George III” for American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies in Pittsburgh, PA in March.

Linda Kinnahan presented “Caroline Bergvall and Visual Technologies” for POETICS: The Next 25 Years in Buffalo, NY in April. She also presented “Poetic Form and Economic Justice in Moore and Ridge” for 21st Century Marianne Moore Conference in Houston, TX in March.

Rebecca May presented “Natural History and the Unnatural Woman: Reframing Taxidermy” for the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies group in Asheville, NC in March.


Jim Purdy was awarded the Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching by the McNulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts this February as well as the Bronze Medal in the Education Theory/Commentary Category for his edited volume The Next Digital Scholar: A Fresh Approach to the Common Core State Standards in Research and Writing at the Independent Publisher Book Awards last fall. In March of 2015 at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), Jim co-presented with Karen Lunsford “Innovations for IP and IRB” in Tampa, FL. Last October he co-presented “Design Thinking in the Writing Center” at the International Writing Centers Association conference in Pittsburgh, PA. In April, he again co-presented with Karen Lunsford, “Intellectual Property Stories in Writing Studies” at CCCC in Houston, TX. Additionally, at CCCC he participated as a speaker on the roundtable for the Intellectual Property in Composition Studies Caucus discussion of “IP Stories from the Field” in March of 2015 as well as this past April. Jim delivered the keynote address, “Literacies in a Digital World: Approaches to Teaching Tomorrow’s Digital Scholar” at the Pace University Faculty Institute Conference in Pleasantville, NY and presented “A Study of Writing in Wikipedia: Ten Years Later” at the Computers and Writing Conference in May in Rochester, NY.

Jerry Stinnett presented “Writing Outcomes as Strategic Action: Defining a Good Start instead of Good Writing in First-Year Writing” for the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Houston, TX in April. He also presented “The Changing Role of English, 1958–1965: Post-Industrialism and the Rhetorical Roots of Disciplinary Composition” for the Rhetoric Society of America Conference in Atlanta, GA in May.


Once again, students and faculty in the Department of English and Theater Arts and its affiliated groups were honored with several awards this spring!

Each spring, the O’Donnell Awards are given to those seniors who have achieved excellence as an English or Theater Arts major. Students receive a monetary award and certificate of excellence at a special Department hosted luncheon.

Congratulations to the 2016 Recipients of the O’Donnell Excellence Awards:

**Excellence in the English Major:** Justin Stec and Jess Jack

**Excellence in Fiction Writing:** Jess Jack and Shannon Small

**Excellence in Poetry Writing:** Jess Jack

**Excellence in Service:** Emily Keith and Mary Claire Murray

**Excellence in Writing Center Consulting:** Shannon Small and Christina Gregory

Doctoral students Cheryl Read and Sara Tavela were this year’s recipients of the Graduate Student Awards for Teaching Excellence from the Center for Teaching Excellence. This is the twelfth year in a row that at least one English graduate student has received an award.

Each spring, the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts presents excellence awards to faculty, graduate students, and staff. Our own Dr. Jim Purdy was awarded for Excellence in Teaching at this year’s ceremony.

Lexicon, Duquesne University’s journal of arts and literature, is a student-run publication advised by Professor John Fried that showcases the poetry, prose, and visual art of our campus community. Since its introduction in 2005, Lexicon has expanded to include not just the publication of the journal, but Open Mic nights and an annual art show held on campus. This year, Lexicon was recognized for its many contributions with not one, but three awards from the Center for Student Involvement: Lexicon editor Katie Auwaerter won Student Leader of the Year, the art show won Program of the Year and the group won the overall award for Student Organization of the Year.
Doctoral Candidate Undertakes Unique Opportunity at MLA Conference

From presenting papers to volunteering, Duquesne graduate students and English majors attend a spectrum of academic conferences to professionalize. Ph.D. candidate Allie Reznik had the unique opportunity to attend the Modern Language Association 2016 Conference in Austin, TX as a Year in Conferences reporter for ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance. The Year in Conferences feature compiles brief reports of presentations from nineteenth-century American panels at conferences including MLA, the American Literature Association, and the American Studies Association. As a Year in Conferences reporter, Allie worked with a team of graduate students from across the country to cover panels of interest at MLA for ESQ readers.

Year in Conferences has been recognized by scholars for its ability to bring together cutting-edge scholarship in nineteenth-century studies. The feature is a powerful mentoring and networking tool as reporters connect with prominent scholars, keep in touch with them as they write their reports, and build professional relationships as they finish their dissertations and enter the job market. While the team of graduate students and advisors covered a huge scope of panels during the conference, they have continued to work together remotely since January to compile, organize, and revise the feature. It has been an incredibly supportive and rewarding experience where graduate students collaboratively create and publish a document that is immediately relevant to nineteenth-century American scholars. Be sure to check out the feature with Allie’s reports, forthcoming in January 2017!

Mentor Program Welcomes Volunteers for Fall 2016

The Duquesne English Arts Program (DEAP) gives English faculty, instructors, students, and alumni an opportunity to serve the local community by offering academic resources to urban youth. Our objective is to help students advance their educational goals through interaction with volunteer mentors.

In Spring 2015, English faculty and graduate students implemented DEAP at the Neighborhood Academy, a college preparatory school in Stanton Heights, and we look forward to continuing the program this fall. Volunteers are needed and we welcome your participation. Please contact Dr. Kathy Glass (glassk@duq.edu) if you would like to tutor or mentor a student in Fall 2016.

TERRA Group Continues Work at Community Garden

This summer, Dr. Sarah Breckenridge Wright will continue work at the Hill District’s MLK Community Garden on behalf of the TERRA Learning Community. She will not be alone in representing Duquesne University, though. Thanks to funding from the Charles Henry Leach II Board of Directors, she will be directing two student interns: Hayley Davis (’19) and Samuel Shaffer (’19), both graduates of TERRA. Dr. Wright, Hayley, and Sam will work alongside community residents, volunteers, and area stakeholders to increase productivity in the community farm, build a play space for children, install a water catchment system, and decorate the space with art. Since opening in 2015, the MLK Community Garden has provided a local, organic, sustainable food source and a community-gathering place to Hill District residents. Dr. Wright is happy to be a part of the project, and is especially pleased that she is able to involve students in this meaningful transformation of a once abandoned ball field into a lively green space.

Spring 2016 Graduates

Master of Arts
Stephen Colorito
Christina Danner
Justin Fanzo
Kayla Firm
Sarah Hancock
Anna Harp
Theresa Hoffman
Allison Keene
Marissa Mosley
Theresa Sullivan

Doctoral
Rachel Luckenbill, Ph.D.
Dissertation: “Representations of Christianity in Contemporary Native American Literature by Women”
Linda Kinnahan, director; Kathy Glass, first reader; Cari Carpenter (WVU), second reader

Erin Rentschler, Ph.D.
Dissertation: “Reading the Vietnam War and Encountering Other Others: Race and Ethnicity in American Novels of the Vietnam War”
Magali Michael, director; Emad Mirmotahari, first reader; Kathy Glass, second reader

Marcie Rovan, Ph.D.
Linda Kinnahan, director; Judy Suh, first reader; Marah Gubar (University of Pittsburgh), second reader
In the Fall 2015 issue, we highlighted some of the department’s involvement in the study abroad program here at Duquesne. The department continues to make study abroad an integral part of the curriculum and has added several “breakaway” courses for students. Offered in conjunction with the Office of International Programs, Spring Breakaway and short-term Summer abroad courses allow faculty to incorporate a study tour into the syllabus. This is a fantastic opportunity for students to physically see and interact with the people, places, and ideas they have been learning about during the semester.

In Spring 2016, our department offered two spring breakaway courses: London Theater: Shakespeare and His Age with Dr. Stuart Kurland and Travel Writing in Paris with Dr. Magali Michael. In both courses, students spent the spring semester attending weekly classes and then went on-location during the week of spring break. Dr. Kurland’s students studied Shakespeare and other playwrights of the late 16th and early 17th century, then traveled to London where they saw live play performances there and in Stratford-upon-Avon, toured The Globe, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the National Theatre, and took in the many historic sites in England’s capital city.

During the same week, Dr. Michael’s students kept a travel journal as they experienced the fantastic art, food, and culture of Paris. After learning about the history and theories of travel writing, the students toured Notre Dame and the Louvre with Duquesne Rome Campus art historian Prof. Liz Lev, took a French cooking class, and visited other historic sites, including the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and the Chateau de Chantilly.

Upon returning, the students were able to generate their own travel writing based on their experience abroad.

Upcoming “breakaway” opportunities from the department include Dr. Greg Barnhisel’s Modern Irish Literature: Yeats/Joyce/Beckett, which will include a trip this summer to Dublin, Galway and Sligo, Ireland, as well as two planned courses for Spring 2017: Creative Writing in Paris with Dr. Faith Barrett and Shaw: Drama and Performance with Professor John Lane, which will include a trip to the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Visiting Speaker, Jean Lutes

On Friday, April 1, Jean Lutes (Villanova) gave a talk entitled “Feeling Syndicated: The Invention of the Advice Columnist in Early 20th-Century America.” Co-sponsored by the English Department, Center for Women’s and Gender Studies, and the Dean’s Office/NEH funds, Dr. Lutes’ talk was the kick-off event for the American Women Writers study group meeting, which took place on the Duquesne campus on Saturday, April 2, from 1 to 5 p.m. Jean Lutes’ first book, Front-Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Literature and Culture, (Cornell, 2006), argues that women’s reporting in the early twentieth century offers a vibrant alternative tradition to the male-dominated journalistic writing that we associate with the rise of literary realism. More recently she has edited a collection of the writings of Pittsburgh’s own Nellie Bly, a late nineteenth century newspaperwoman whose sensational reporting broke gender barriers and inspired many imitators (Around the World in Seventy-Two Days, Penguin, 2014). Lutes’ talk was drawn from her current book project, which focuses on mass print culture, emotion, and women’s narratives in early twentieth-century America.

On Saturday morning, participants in the American Women Writers study group met at the Detre Library at the Heinz History Center, where the archivists provided an excellent overview of their holdings relevant to research on women writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the afternoon, participants reconvened on the Duquesne campus for discussion of a set of readings that focused on the work of American women journalists in the late nineteenth century. The meeting drew participants from the University at Buffalo, Oberlin College, Hunter College, Rutgers, New Jersey City University, and the University of Pittsburgh among other institutions. English Department faculty and graduate students who participated included Marla Anzalone, Faith Barrett, Kathy Glass, Linda Kinnahan, Allie Reznik, and Lisa Weddell.
An Evening with Bill Deasy

On April 11, singer, songwriter, novelist, and screenwriter Bill Deasy spoke at Duquesne University as part of the annual Spring Reading Series event. The annual series—sponsored by the First-Year Writing Program, the English Department, and the Provost’s Office—works to demonstrate the continued relevance of writing in contemporary society by giving students a chance to encounter prominent local authors in a dynamic environment. This year’s event took place in the University’s Union Ballroom where more than 250 students and faculty listened as Deasy spoke about the connections between his personal history and his creative process. Opening with a performance of a new song entitled “Then December,” Deasy discussed his crafting of the song and related how the lyrics and melody fit within the broader emotional tenor of his work, which he described as melancholy but hopeful. The event included three such performances and a reading of selections from the author’s novel Ransom Seaborn.

Throughout the talk, Deasy emphasized identifying a theme or emotion one can evoke in audience members as central to creating impactful and relatable artistic performances. His own such identification, he said, had roots in his early childhood and the death of a younger brother. Deasy’s story about writing the late 90s local radio favorite “Lost in America” reflected these tenets, suggesting how his personal outlook led him to incorporate scenes of the rivers, steel mills, and railroad tracks that characterize the Pittsburgh landscape into the song. The event concluded with a Q&A session during which students had a chance to learn how Deasy distinguished himself in the local music scene, decided to take up writing for a living, and improved his craft as a songwriter and novelist.
Beyond Nebraska: Willa Cather’s Pittsburgh

The 16th International Cather Seminar
Duquesne University
June 11-17, 2017

Pittsburgh, where Willa Cather lived from 1899 to 1936, is known as the “City of Bridges” for the many bridges dotting the city. The Southside Street Bridge, pictured here, is a National Historic Landmark and the oldest Pittsburgh bridge still in service, carrying traffic across the Monongahela River. It is the setting of an important scene in Cather’s novel "My Ántonia.

CALL FOR PAPERS
Beyond Nebraska: Willa Cather’s Pittsburgh
The 16th International Willa Cather Seminar

Dates: June 11-17, 2017
Location: Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Directors: Dr. Timothy Hirtle, Saint Francis University
Dr. James Jaap, Penn State Greater Allegheny
Site Director: Dr. Faith Barrett, Duquesne University

Willa Cather fell in love with Nebraska in 1896 and for the next decade made Pittsburgh her primary residence. During those ten years, Pittsburgh rapidly expanded as steel, glass, and other industries grew to meet the demand of a growing nation. Immigrants and African Americans flocked to the city as jobs were readily available, and the city nearly tripled in population during this decade. This was Cather’s first experience as an urban, multi-ethnic and-racial city, and she took advantage of all the city had to offer. She worked as an editor, teacher, reviewer, and freelance writer. She cultivated friendships and mixed with all sorts of Pittsburghers. She published extensively—not only hundreds of profiles and reviews, but also more than thirty short stories, a collection of poetry, April Twilight (1903), and "The Troll Garden," her first collection of stories. After moving to New York in 1906, she continued visiting Pittsburgh until 1916, writing parts of several novels at the McClung residence. Despite the importance Pittsburgh played in her life, much remains undiscovered. This seminar will further explore the influence of Pittsburgh on Cather’s life and career.

Please send 300-word proposals of individual papers to the Willa Cather Foundation’s education director, Tracy Tucker, at ttucker@WillaCather.org, by February 15, 2017. If your proposal is accepted, you will be notified by March 15, 2017. You will need to submit your final paper by May 1, 2017. Papers should be 8-10 pages in length (20 minutes when read).