Remembering Dr. Beranek

by Dan Watkins

"Tote that barge, lift that bale": More times than I can count, Bernie left my office reciting these lines from Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein’s "Ol’ Man River," and over time I came to know why: he understood and believed the song’s message that life is all too often—and seemingly unnecessarily—a burden and a struggle. But he also recognized the beauty of the song, and through the beauty of the song he recognized the beauty of life. He was a stern and unflinching observer of the world, refusing to turn away from its more melancholy realities; but his steady faith and his habitual aesthetic sensibilities lifted him to a higher ground, to which he invited others, where beauty and human dignity were always available to those who chose to discover them. Thus, while he recognized the truths set out, say, in Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy, he also recognized the sheer joy to be found in an old sea shanty, a folk song, or a limerick, and the redemptive truths to be found in the poems of Wordsworth, the plays of Shakespeare, or the legends of King Arthur.

I met Bernie in June 1985, when I came to Duquesne to interview for the position I now hold. Then-chair Jay Keenan put me in Bernie’s care for a half hour or so before the formal interview was to begin. While making small talk with Bernie, I asked what he was scheduled to teach in the fall, to which he replied that he had prepared a course on Free Will and Determinism. Upon hearing the course topic, I asked him (my awkward desire to be witty getting the better of my good sense)—I do not advise our graduate students to handle a job interview in this way—who wins? Without blinking, Bernie said “Free Will, of course,” and he began

continued on next page
Remembering Dr. Beranek

continued from page 1

to explain why. Almost before I knew it, I found myself engaged in a wide-ranging conversation that unfolded in great waves, beginning with a consideration of the terms at hand and quickly moving outward to topics ranging from biblical and theological interpretation, to Aristotle, to psychology, to pedagogy, to social theory.

That conversation continued for more than twenty-seven years. Indeed, it time I came to rely on Bernie as the person most ready, even eager, to have respectful, serious, and happy discussions of any topic that might stretch the mind, test one’s power of recall, or deepen one’s understanding of a literary, philosophical, or religious text. These conversations—Bernie insisted on this—were always interspersed with jokes, droll asides, and astonishing flights of associative thinking, all of which leavened the serious exchange of ideas, and always left me feeling blessed and my life enriched.

Bernie’s commitment to the life of the mind, and to its full range of interests, stood comfortably alongside his unflagging insistence on the importance of one’s quality of life. Anyone who knew him, even casually, came to learn that he did not move quickly. And this fact, I think, was by design. He once told me that because, when he was in the navy, he was made by his superiors to run everywhere he went, he made a promise to himself that once out of military service he would never hurry again. But I do not believe that this is the real reason for his taking his time in life or in conversation. Rather, I believe that he wanted to feel, to experience fully, ideas moving about in his mind and through the ether across minds, and to take in the world around him as he ambled along. Unlike Chaucer’s Franklin, he was always just as busy as he seemed: busy thinking, pondering, mulling over. And he invited anyone interested in having a good conversation to think, ponder, and mull over with him. He liked ideas and he liked people, and he believed that both were essential to a meaningful life.

Bernie’s dedication to smart, respectful, and wide-ranging conversation cannot be divorced from his love of books, which was no ordinary love. Hardly a week would go by that I did not notice a new large order of books in the mailroom that had arrived for Bernie. He loved to read them, to poke around in them for out-of-the-way details, to smell them, to hold them and feel their texture. There was nothing about a book that he did not love. He stored his books—more than 25,000 of them—in his office and in his home. But he also stored them in his head, or at least the best parts of each one he stored in his head. So if you were interested in Elizabeth Bishop or The Seafarer, or in medieval mapmaking or Czech architecture, or in Mahler or The Chad Mitchell Trio, he could talk to you about it. And after that conversation, he would come back to your office an hour or so later with additional information that he had researched in the interim, and you’d know that he had been thinking about what you had said, and searching through his library to find a way to help you understand your interests better. I blush to think about how much research he did for me, all because we had had a conversation about my work and he had books in his office. He was generous in that way. The books were his, but they were never only a solitary pleasure for him; they were a means of engaging with people in a meaningful, even intimate, way.

All of Bernie’s loves—of books, conversation, people, art, laughter—were held together and given life by a far greater love: of his faith and family. For Bernie, there was no separation between his Catholic faith and steady and direct intellectual inquiry; his faith sustained his intellect, which for him was a means, in turn, of deepening faith. No subject was off limits for discussion that unfolded in great waves, beginning with a consideration of the terms at hand and quickly moving outward to topics ranging from biblical and theological interpretation, to Aristotle, to psychology, to pedagogy, to social theory.

Bernie was a rare and gentle being, who will long be missed. But I am sure that he would want us, in this time of our grief, to remember a line from Wordsworth: “Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.” And he would want us to continue our respectful conversations with one another, and to take pleasure in the unimaginable beauties and joys that remain in this rich world.

Farewell, old friend.
Dr. Brannen Remembers Bernie

Anne Brannen wanted to share the speech she gave at Dr. Beranek’s retirement reception as a remembrance:

When I first arrived here 20 years ago with my shiny new doctorate, there were two other medievalists in the English department, Frank Zbozny, whom some of you remember, and Bernie Beranek. As the junior medievalist, I expected to be able to teach such things as medieval drama, my specialty, since the senior medievalists probably didn’t want it, but I certainly didn’t expect to have an opportunity to teach Chaucer. For professors of medieval English literature, no matter the specialty, the Chaucer course would be the hands-down favorite, since, as everybody knows, there is no end to the infinite wonderfulness of Chaucer.

But Frank and Bernie were generous, very generous, and as soon as I arrived, we worked out, together, a schedule, so that we all got to teach Chaucer, in a round. That’s the welcome I got, as a new medievalist. I remember clearly the pride and delight they took in telling me that I would be in on the Chaucer rotation. They knew it to be a mark of an excellent work place.

They were so right. I was home. Frank retired many years ago, and Bernie and I have been, since then, the department medievalists, working together on course planning, doctoral exams, dissertations. A partnership, always a partnership. And for a while now I have been one of the department’s senior scholars, charged with mentoring the new professors, and giving them a chance to shine, continuing the work that I was taught by Bernie.

And Bernie has continued, through these decades, to be unflaggingly generous with his time and his scholarship. He is always available for intellectual conversations with other professors, with graduate students, with undergraduates. Indeed, that is what he is most beloved for amongst his students, his welcome to them when they drop by his office, his attention, his interest in their projects. His breadth of knowledge is astonishing. No matter the subject of a medieval dissertation, he has excellent suggestions for students, concerning avenues of inquiry, alternate ways of thinking.

I will let Chaucer describe him:

For hym was levere have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fitele, or gay sartie.
But al be that he was a philosophie,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,
On bookeys and his iernye he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede,
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,
And that was sedy in forme and reverence,
And short and quyk, and ful of hy sentence.
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

I speak for the English department when I thank him for his years of service, and particularly for his example of scholarly generosity. We wish him many years: time to enjoy his legendary library, time to continue conversations and arguments. And I myself promise to share Chaucer with his successor.

English Department Alumni Remember Dr. Beranek

What first comes to mind when I remember Dr. Beranek is his passion for learning, even as a deeply learned person already. I can still see the look he got when someone would share something new, a book or an idea, that was worthy of inspection. He would make a barely perceptible lurch forward, a physical embodiment of his intellectual momentum, and his eyes would widen as he would position his glasses on his face to study the question or material. His openness to new ideas was a trait that made him effective in the classroom, as well. He was indeed generous with ideas and conversation. We, his students, were lucky; he validated our ideas as he expanded our intellectual horizons. I’ve always been partial to the dictum of Hugh of St. Victor: “Learn everything; you will see afterwards that nothing is superfluous.” Bernie knew exactly what that meant.

David Leshock, Ph.D. 1999

Dr. Beranek taught me that a book’s binding and pages are just as important as the content it contains.

Anne Paolicelli, M.A. 2011

Dr. Beranek always used to say “Books are to be consulted, not read.” Dr. Beranek fit that description perfectly. He was not a prolific writer; he was a prolific thinker, philosopher, and teacher. If nothing else, I learned from Dr. Beranek two quite important lessons: 1) It is NEVER too late to learn something new. 2) We have a responsibility to foster in others the love we have for literature ourselves. (This latter point is doubly true for medievalists.) I will miss him dearly, but I suspect he at long last is able to confirm everything he suspected throughout the years when teaching the texts he loved.

Jeff Stoyanoff, current Ph.D. student

Bernie Beranek was an inspiring first professor for this green graduate student. A cross between Vergil and Whitman, he led us so far into the stacks with his Treasure Hunt minutia, that if we emerged, we were indefatigable researchers. There was a small sensation among alumni when, years later, some weary graduate student finally bagged the author of the play “Deck Hand” that had eluded several years’ classes (Robert Coover). When I proposed Richard Brautigan for the topic of my annotated bibliography, Bernie muttered, “Nonsense. You’re reading the last fifteen years of scholarship on Gray’s Elegy.” “Vertical files,” he confided on another occasion, “will save you years of labor, Mr. Bintrim—so ask.” Now all my freshmen writers receive a Library Treasure Hunt, scaled to their skills, but bearing Beranekian wisdom: “No time doing research is wasted.”

Timothy Bintrim, Ph.D. 2004

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Faerie Queene fans! Imagine, if you will, the Red Crosse Knight stepping into the therapist’s office. Maybe her name is Una. Maybe he takes off his helmet for the session, or he just slightly lifts the visor. They discuss his trust issues. Pharmacological options come up. On his way out, she reminds him, “You must cherish yourself. You must not be too solemn sad.”

I took three courses with Dr. Beranek while completing my Ph.D. at Duquesne. One sharpened my research skills in ways I’d never known existed when I was working on my Master’s. Sunday afternoons, haggard with last-minutedness, I’d get to the Gumberg to complete the research scavenger hunt he’d designed to get us all around the library and into its most neglected creases; rounding a corner in some remote index stack, I’d bump into a classmate, also haggard with last-minutedness. What a wandering wood a library was, and indeed the way out was the way in. I continue to be amazed at how much I learned from that Aims and Methods class, and how much of it is news to even the most sophisticated undergraduate majors and graduate students I work with in my teaching.

Yet, at the same time that we were being made to tackle the hard-tack issues of literary scholarship and research, Dr. Beranek could teach you important and lasting deep-personal lessons, often through the trust issues. Pharmacological options come up. On his way out, she reminds him, “You must cherish yourself. You must not be too solemn sad.”

I suspect Dr. Beranek liked to “test” all the platitudes, too, by seeing if the older literatures had found more inventive, memorable ways to drive them home. On those bookshelves in his office, with the five-pound sack of King Arthur Flour seeming to brace an overflow of volumes against sliding to the floor, Dr. Beranek stored the matter from which so many platitudes are blithely extracted. If a platitude is a long-stemmed rose, those books were the very ground in which those roses grew. So when, at the end of a dissertation meeting qua protacted chat about everything under the sun, I stood up to go and Dr. Beranek reminded me, in so many words, not to be too solemn sad and to cherish myself—there was weight behind those admonitions, and roots below them.

Enough to make me consider them, and eventually, try to live by them.

Ellen McGrath Smith, Ph.D. 2002

The Best Field Trip Ever

I got word last weekend that one of my graduate school professors died shortly after Thanksgiving. I remember him fondly (though realistically) for his absent-mindedness, his long digressions, and his books.

But the story I tell most often of him is of The Best Field Trip Ever.

It was ten years ago now, in early November 2002, and I was working as his research assistant (and doing a terrible job, by the way: I was the worst research assistant ever, and I’m not sure anyone other than him knew it. He was a gracious man). I was also planning a wedding.

Dr. B. had strong opinions about many things, and, as I learned that fall, one of his favored concerns was wedding cake and the quality—or lack thereof—at most weddings. He told in rapturous recollection of his own wedding cake. Other than his wife, it seemed to be the only thing he recalled from the event.

So knowing I was planning a wedding for the following spring, Dr. B. asked what thought and research I had given to the cake. I admitted that it hadn’t been high on my priority list and that we had simply figured on “something.” This was not good enough, and Dr. B. announced that he knew just the place. It was a little French bakery, oddly plunked down in a gritty suburb of western Pennsylvania.

A week or so later, he asked if I had followed up on it. I hadn’t. (I was slightly better at wedding planning than research assisting, but not much.)

Another week or two? I still hadn’t made a visit to the French bakery.

By early November, Dr. B. decided to take matters into his own hands. He would take me to the bakery himself.

We scheduled a trip for a gloomy Thursday morning, leaving campus at about 9:30. I wondered if this would count toward the research assisting hours I was not completing.

We drove the fifteen or twenty minutes from campus and exited off the highway into an alcove town. As we passed through the business area, Dr. B. also waved at a candy store off to the right. “They make the best homemade vanilla ice cream,” as we drove on another block and a half to the bakery.

Inside the tiny shop, I turned toward a photo album on a stand that held pictures of elaborate tiered cakes. I glanced at some price information discreetly and noted $4.25 a slice as the estimate. Um. It would probably be good, but it was well beyond our budget.

Dr. B. looked over my shoulder at the pictures, but he also attended to the bakery case, buying something to send to his daughter out of town. He asked which pastry I would choose, and we went out each with a treat in our hands and he with a box under his arm. It was lovely.

We climbed back in the car and turned the corner back toward the highway. He surprised me, though, “Do you like vanilla ice cream?” It was about 10:30 in the morning.

We pulled around the block again and parked in front of the candy store with red awnings. We headed toward the back—an old-fashioned soda counter with red stools to match the awnings out front. He ordered us each a small dish of ice cream (having just finished the pastries, mind you), and we sat at the counter and chatted about the weather.
I commented that the gloomy grey of November days always reminded me of Truman Capote’s “A Christmas Memory”—a story I had read in high school that stuck with me even though I didn’t realize it at the time. I told him I think of days like that one as “fruitcake weather,” though I’ve never made a fruitcake in my life.

He mused that his wife made fruitcake every year—in fact, she had recently started on this year’s batch. He wondered if she needed more bourbon.

We finished our ice cream, pushed the dishes back, and headed back to the car once more.

Just before the exit to the highway, right on the edge of the tiny business district, was a state liquor store. Dr. B. pulled in the parking lot without comment, and as he turned off the car, he announced that he thought he should pick up some more bourbon for his wife’s fruitcakes. So, I followed him in and down the aisles, while he picked up a modest bottle.

He paid for his purchase, and we climbed back in the car.

As we drove back to campus, I pondered the morning’s trip, realizing its strangeness and its beauty. We got back to campus about 11:15.

I have a number of other recollections of Dr. B., but this is my favorite. One that I shared with no fellow students, and one that solidifies my understanding of who he was. Whether he was talking about poems, book collecting, paper-making, liturgical practice, or food, he most of all had a warmth and passion to share with others whatever joy he found in the world.

And while I am a very different teacher than he was, I hope that, someday, some students will be able to ponder some strange trek that shows them something more about how they see the world.

Thank you, Dr. B.

Rest eternal grant to him, O Lord, and may light perpetual shine upon him.

Jenny Bangsund, Ph.D. 2007
Timothy Bintrim (Ph.D. 2004) has been elected Chair of the Literature and Languages Department at St. Francis University. He also recently took eight students on a medical mission to Virginia volunteering with the Remote Area Medical Foundation, which provided free treatment to more than 1,000 underserved individuals that weekend. In addition, his article on Willa Cather’s treatment in her poetry of the alcoholism and bipolar disorder of her friend, Sewickley-born composer Ethelbert Nevin, will appear in the Willa Cather Newsletter & Review in Spring 2013.

Eileen Foster (Ph.D. 2005) The Broadview edition of Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Clarence; or, A Tale of Our Own Times, was recognized with an Honorable Mention, Society for the Study of American Women Writers 2012 Edition Award. She co-edited the edition with Melissa J. Homestead, U of Nebraska-Lincoln. For those who have not yet read Clarence, it is a great classroom option for courses in transatlantic fiction, novels of manners, and 19th-century American literature, and a read that students enjoy.

Greta Harman (B.A. 2012) has begun working for the Peace Corps in China.

Ellyn McGrath Smith (Ph.D. 2002) recently received the Orlando Prize from A Room of One’s Own Foundation for her creative nonfiction piece, “The Locust: A Foundational Narrative”; the piece will be published in the Los Angeles Review in March 2013. Three of her poems are scheduled to be published in Qualify’s next issue, and one of her poems will be included in the new anthology The Poetry of Yoga, vol. 2. She recently read at St. Mark’s Poetry Project in New York and at the Morgantown Poets in West Virginia. In February, she will join Linda Kinnahan and others on panels devoted to the work of the late Adrienne Rich at the University of Louisville Twentieth-Century Literature Conference. She continues as Reviews Editor for Sentence: A Journal of Prose Poetics, and is always open to review essays by Duquesne faculty, grad students, and alumni (contact her at ems9@pitt.edu).

Laurie McMillan (Ph.D. 2004) is the Chair of the English Department and was also awarded CASE Professor of the Year at Marywood University. Laurie also has an upcoming publication with co-author Kimberly Pavlick, titled “Higher Order Thinking and Civic Engagement: The Interdisciplinary Nature of Journalism” in Radical Pedagogy.

Ruth Newberry (Ph.D. 2011) presented a paper, “Wallace Stegner’s ‘Personal, Family, and Cultural Chores’—Literary Social Justice for Western American Writers in 1960s America,” at the 47th Annual Western American Literature Conference in Lubbock, Texas, in November 2011. Additionally, her position at Duquesne University changed. As of November 1, 2012, she was promoted to Director of Duquesne University’s Online Campus after serving as Director of Educational Technology from 2003-2012. In her new position, she will be working with the schools to grow Duquesne’s offerings for online degree programs, certifications, and courses across the academic disciplines.

Amy Criniti Phillips (Ph.D. 2011) is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English and the Director of Undergraduate Student Success at Wheeling Jesuit University. She also published “‘I Want to Serve Two Masters’: Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s Revision of the Female Consumer in The Doctor’s Wife” in Women’s Writing (2012).

Jason Vanfossen (M.A. 2011) presented a paper at the Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Association titled “The Uncollapsible Woman: Refuting Rape Victimhood and Survivorship in Detective Television Shows,” in September 2012.

Sr. Rita Yeasted (Ph.D. 1981) was chosen this summer as part of the two-woman leadership team of her religious community, the Sisters for Christian Community. Her two-year term as International Communications Coordinator begins in July.

Alumni Updates

Thank you so much to all of you who contributed to the successful drive to endow the Dr. Albert C. Labriola Memorial Library Fund. Students and faculty for years to come will benefit from your generosity. In January 2012, the fund hit the $25,000 mark, the dollar amount that allows use of the interest. The library can begin to utilize the interest to purchase books as of July 1, 2013. In June 2012, the fund was further endowed with a $75,000 grant (to be paid over a two-year period) from the Nimick Forbesway Foundation, which the Department of English also sincerely thanks.

A Labriola Memorial Library Fund Committee has been formed to oversee the selection and purchase of books. The committee has been structured in the following way: the University librarian will chair the committee, which will consist of the chair of the English Department and the chair of the English Department’s Library Committee. The first year’s purchases will be dedicated to enhancing the library’s holdings in Renaissance Studies in memory of Dr. Labriola.

Labriola Memorial

www.duq.edu/english
Faculty Updates

Greg Barnhise, Jennifer Gorman, and Evan Stoddard’s article “Incorporating Process-Based Writing into First-Year Learning Communities” appeared in the Journal of General Education 61.4 (2012), and his 2010 collection Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War went into a paperback edition this fall.

He also received a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for 2013, as well as a $500 research grant from the Eisenhower Foundation. Both grants are to help him research and complete his book Cold War Modernists.

Greg also presented “The State Department, the Smithsonian, and Cold War Modernism” at the Modernist Studies Association, Las Vegas, Nevada, October 2012.

Craig Bernier won the St. Lawrence Book Award for his collection of short stories, Your Life Idyllical, which is forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press.


John Fried published his short story “Destroy All Monsters” in Blue Penny Quarterly, Fall 2012, and his short story “Mississippi” in Spout Magazine.


Linda Kinnahan presented two papers: “Portraits of Work, Women, and Industry; Lola Ridge’s ‘The Ghetto’ and the Camera’s Visual Record” at the Fourteenth Annual Conference of the Modernist Studies Association, Las Vegas, Nevada, October 2012 (Panel organizer, Making a Spectacle: Women Poets and the Avant-Garde) and “HOW(ever): The Art of Cover Art” at the Poetry of the 80s: National Poetry Foundation Conference, University of Maine, Orono, Massachusetts, June 2012.


Jessica McCort presented “‘The Interrupted Story’: Children’s Literature and Elizabeth Bishop’s Exploratory Aesthetics,” at the 23rd Annual American Literature Association National Conference (May 2012); “‘Off with her head!’: Children’s Literature and the Wonderland of Horror,” at the PCA/ACA National Conference (Boston, Massachusetts, April 2012); “‘This Smith Cinderella’: Breaking the Glass Coffin In The Bell Jar” at the Sylvia Plath Symposium, Bloomington, Indiana, October 2012; and, “Hansel and Gretel’ and Elizabeth Bishop’s ‘The Farmer’s Children’,” at the SWTX PCA/ACA Regional Conference.

Emad Mirmotahari chaired a Duquesne Graduate Student panel at the African Studies Association entitled “The Quest for Relevance: Challenges and Approaches to Teaching African Literature” (Annual Convention, Philadelphia, 11/29-12/1 2012) Presenters included:

× Lisa Silverman, “Frontiers for Teaching African Literature in the American Secondary Classroom: Improving Cultural Literacy by Expanding the Traditional Literary Canon”

× Matthew Durkin, “African Literature as an Introduction to Literature”

× Ian Butcher, “Why are you making us read this?” African Literature in the Freshman Classroom”

× Emad Mirmotahari, “Africa, the Disciplines, and Literature”

Additionally, he presented a paper at the conference entitled “What World Literature Can Learn From African Literature.”


He presented “Putting Our Multimedia Where Our Mouth Is: The Architecture of a New M.A. Concentration” at the Computers and Writing conference (North Carolina State University, May 20, 2012). He also spoke as a member of the roundtable “Convers(at)ions in the Writing Center: Turning Ideas and Identities” for the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing in Chicago, November 3, 2012.

He is also pleased to share that the University Writing Center is entering its fifth year of increased student patronage. And he and his wife welcomed their first child, Noah James Purdy, in December!


Judy also presented “The Middle East in the British Late Modernist Imagination,” Modernist Studies Association, Las Vegas, Nevada, October 2012.
This year marks a major milestone in the long and storied history of the Duquesne University Red Masquers. The 2012-13 season is the 100th anniversary season of Pennsylvania’s oldest amateur theater group. Long associated with the English Department, the Red Masquers have been producing a vast array of plays for Duquesne and the Pittsburgh theater-going audience. From the very first production of Aglestis in the original Greek to world premiere productions of brand new plays, the Masquers have been thrilling audiences for a century.

The Masquer season is very ambitious this year. Professor John Lane, Artistic Director of the Masquers, has decided on a season of all world premieres. “When programming this celebratory season I thought it was important to not just look back at the amazing history of the Red Masquers, but more importantly to look forward to another 100 years of theater at Duquesne,” said Mr. Lane. “In keeping with that idea we have decided to produce a season of all world premieres. We were fortunate to get Mr. Hartland’s play and we have two outstanding works by alumni who are at the beginning of their playwriting careers and we are excited to be able to help them along in their careers,” added Lane.

To celebrate their centennial the Masquers opened the season with an original variety show detailing the history of the group on campus. Aptly titled The History of the Red Masquers: A Variety Show, the production was written and directed by Duquesne Alumni Bill Lyon and TJ Firneno. The production showcased and spoofed some of the more unusual highlights of the Masquers history including a wacky spoof of Medea, the many instances of Masquer theaters burning to the ground, and the migratory nature of the Masquers until they finally found a permanent home in Peter Mills Auditorium. The production ran over Homecoming weekend and was a fundraiser for the Keenan-Lane scholarship for the most outstanding Red Masquer.

The second show the company produced was Be Our Guest by local playwright F. J. Hartland. The outrageous farce in the Kaufmann and Hart tradition tickled audiences’ funny bones and pulled at their heart strings. Students were joined by alumni and staff to pull off the huge farce. This was the second show by Mr. Hartland that the Masquers were able to premiere. Two years earlier the troupe mounted a production of Shuffle, Ball Change,... and Die! To similar success. The English Department is happy to also have Mr. Hartland join its ranks as an adjunct instructor of playwriting.

The Masquers will open the second semester with American Tragedies by alumnæ David Katzin. The play tells the history of one of the bitterest rivalries in theater history between William Charles MacReady and Edwin Forrest. The rivalry culminated in the Astor Place Riots in New York City where over 30 theater patrons were killed and hundreds more wounded. The play examines the use of patriotism to justify outrageous actions. Performances are February 7 - 9 and 14 – 16.

The final mainstage show is another premiere by a Duquesne Alumnæ. March by Matt Smith is a bitter-sweet tale of a teenager trying to find love. The twist here is that he tries to find love by enlisting the help of two witches who live in the basement of the high school and act as guidance counselors to the students. The local Army recruiter finds out that the witches have been using the high school basement rent free and decides to move his recruitment office into the school to save money. Hilarity ensues! Performance dates are April 11-13 and 17 – 20.

The Masquers have many more productions and surprises scheduled throughout the year including one act festivals, Pittsburgh Monologue Projects, a fancy Black Tie Cabaret, and many other events so keep an eye out for the announcements to those events.

All Masquer performances are free (except the Black Tie Cabaret) to students, faculty, staff and Masquer alumni with an Honorary Card!
Assistant Professors

Dr. Beth Buhot Runquist
Dr. Beth Buhot Runquist serves as a Visiting Assistant Professor for the 2012-2013 academic year. She earned her Ph.D. from Duquesne University in the fall of 2011. She specializes in contemporary American literature and the literature and culture of the American suburbs. She also teaches multiple sections in the first-year writing program.

Dr. Runquist's primary research interest is recent literature and film that depicts the experiences of women in the 20th- and 21st-century American suburbs. She is particularly interested in learning why many recent novels and films affirm the suburbs' reputations as controlled and controlling environments that limit women to thankless domestic tasks and to physical and social isolation while other recent texts revise or reject this notion. She is currently writing on literature published since the housing crisis, including Tom Perrotta’s The Leftovers and Eric Puchner’s Model Home.

In addition to reading and writing, she enjoys swimming, music, and spending time with her husband, Matt, and her twelve-year-old mutt, Gus. A true Pittsburgher, she is also an avid Penguins fan, a lover of pirogies, and an expert bargain hunter.

Dr. Bettina Jones
Dr. Bettina Jones serves as a Visiting Assistant Professor for the 2012-2013 academic year. She earned her Ph.D. from Duquesne in 2011 after completing a dissertation on August Wilson's Century Cycle reflecting many of her scholarly interests: regional literatures, African American literature, 20th century American literature, place and identity, Pittsburgh history, and the history of urban redevelopment.

She has taught for many years as an adjunct in the university’s First-Year Writing Program. Dr. Jones’ teaching and research also reflects her long-standing interest in popular culture, particularly the horror, sci-fi, western, and detective genres.

When not at Duquesne, she enjoys spending time with her family and pets, cheering on her daughter’s softball team, gardening, and watching wildlife. She also spends much of her summer watching wildlife eat her garden.
New Concentration in Master’s Program

The department is very excited to announce a new track to our Master’s Program in English. Beginning this fall, M.A. students were able to choose a Concentration in Writing, Media Arts, and Technology. Partnering with the Department of Journalism and Multimedia Arts, the new concentration keeps the same core English classes, but then adds the equivalent of a Certificate in Media Arts and Technology. Our thinking was that the common bond between the two departments is the art of telling a story, and our goal is to train students to interpret, produce, and manage stories across a range of media platforms.

Applying the Art of Storytelling in Today’s Media

The M.A. in English with a Concentration in Writing, Media Arts, and Technology blends an emphasis on learning the history of storytelling with the process of learning how to produce narratives in a variety of media. The goal is to provide graduates with a broader skillset that improves workforce marketability.

In this program, students:
• Build a solid foundation in literary studies
• Develop sophisticated interpretive and critical thinking skills
• Learn core writing principles and methodologies for writing across different media
• Get hands-on experience with today’s publishing technology

Degree Requirements
Students complete a total of 36 credits to earn a Master of Arts in English with a Concentration in Writing and Multimedia Arts.

English
English 500 Aims and Methods of Literary Study (3 credits)
English 566 Literary Theory (3 credits)
Historically based literature requirements (12 credits)
Writing class electives, which may include JMA courses such as Media Writing (6 credits)

Journalism and Multimedia Arts
JMA 501 Introduction to Multimedia Technology
JMA 573 Law & Intellectual Property

6 credits in one of three concentrations:

Multimedia – pick two courses
JMA 505 Graphic Design
JMA 522 Visual Design and Layout
JMA 530 Digital Imaging for Multimedia
JMA 579 Digital Video Production

or

Web Design – pick two courses
JMA 545 Web Interface Design
JMA 564 Human Computer Interaction
JMA 574 Web Design

or

Media Management – pick two courses
JMA 505 Graphic Design
JMA 518 Public Relations Campaigns
or JMA 519 Advertising Production
JMA 568 Media Management

In addition, Ph.D. student Mary Parish is bringing her vast experience in the corporate world to bear on the project of developing internship opportunities for the new concentrators. Mary has developed D.A.N.E., the Duquesne Alumni Network in English, to bring together graduates of the department, past and present, for participation in panels, information sessions, and individual mentoring relationships. If you are an Alumnus/a and would like to be part of this network, please contact Laura Callanan at callananl@duq.edu or Mary Parish at parishm@duq.edu to be added to the list!
Stewart O’Nan Gives a Reading at Duquesne

On Monday, March 26, 2012, best-selling novelist and Pittsburgh native Stewart O’Nan gave a reading before a packed crowd of more than 700 attendees at the Power Center Ballroom. O’Nan is the author of seventeen books, including Snow Angels (Doubleday, 1994), A Prayer for the Dying (Henry Holt, 1999), as well as two recent novels Emily, Alone (Viking, 2011) and The Odds (Viking, 2012). He is also the author of Faithful: Two Diehard Boston Red Sox Fans Chronicle the Historic 2004 Season (Scribner, 2004) written with Stephen King.

The reading, sponsored by the English Department, First-Year Writing Program, and Office of the Provost, brought in students and faculty from all over the University as well as Duquesne alumni, students from surrounding universities and colleges, and local residents. Most Duquesne students had read O’Nan’s work in advance; in particular, his book Last Night at the Lobster (Viking, 2007) was used in many of the Core 102 courses during the semester. O’Nan read excerpts from Lobster, as well as short scenes from several other novels. A question-and-answer session followed the reading, during which audience members asked questions about where he found his ideas for his writing and his process as a writer. O’Nan came bearing gifts as well, handing out dozens of best-selling books by other authors to students at the end of the reading, as a reward for asking questions or simply attending the reading. A book sale and signing followed the event.

O’Nan was born in Pittsburgh, went to college at Boston University, and later received his M.F.A. from Cornell University. His first and only book of short stories, In the Walled City, won the 1993 Drue Heinz Prize for literature and was published by University of Pittsburgh Press. In 2007, his novel Snow Angels was made into a movie starring Sam Rockwell and Kate Beckinsale.

Upcoming Events

March 12-13, 2013
(anti)Foundations: An Interdisciplinary Conference
Graduate Student Conference
Keynote speaker: Danielle St. Hilaire
Please see the department website for more information and the call for papers: www.duq.edu/english

April 4, 2013
Visiting Speaker Series: Toi Derricote
Pittsburgh poet and University of Pittsburgh faculty member
7 p.m., Power Center Ballroom
Connect with us!

The Duquesne University Department of English is on Facebook, and we’d love to keep in touch with you through that channel. Check us out:

facebook.com/duqenglish