



The English Update



A newsletter for English majors at BSC
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The Results Are In: Students Evaluate The English Major

The English Department recently conducted a survey of 150 majors. Below are selected responses to the question "In general, what would you like the department to do to improve its programs, courses, course offerings, and service to its students?" Dr. Pezzulich, chair of the dept., responds on back page.

"Have EN-203: Writing About Literature be required earlier in the major. Plus, have more classes of it offered. Perhaps have more classes that deal with literature of other countries. Right now it's mostly American and British literature."

"I would have enjoyed a wider variety of writing courses such as script writing, additional business writing courses, and possibly something to deal with technology/computers. I'm not sure if an entire course would be warranted, but a course on what to do with an English major would be appreciated."

Script Writing Internships

This semester, three students—Melissa Hassan, Josh Eastman, and Lauren Carter—are working on a documentary of the oldest MA state prison, in Walpole.

Hassan said that she is learning how to write scripts and incorporate video and still pictures into her writing. "The most interesting thing I have done so far would be the tour of Walpole. I had this idea in my head, like

"Providing workshops on different types of writing, jobs that require writing skills and possibly having writers in to discuss how to get a start in the writing field as a profession."

"I am double majoring with Elementary Ed. and I am finding it impossible to fulfill all of the requirements for both majors."

"I would really like to have more writing courses offered, also more frequently—it would be nice, as an aspiring fiction writer, to be able to take at least one creative writing course before I graduate. . . . As for literature, classes that explore more minority writers, writings and their issues—ethnic, racial and sexual orientation—would be great."

"I would have liked to be able to take some courses dealing with writing for publication. I would like to write children's books and would not know where to start or how to be successful."

"Writing should play a stronger part—students, particularly English students, should be required to write

prisons in movies, and it was far different.

"Prisoners were walking around. They had TVs and radios in their cells and were hanging around. We got heckled and my stomach was in knots while I was trying to not pay attention to their yells. But the experience was crucial to my writing of the script."

Most English majors get internships by working with both John Paganelli in Career Services and

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more than they are. Writing is a skill acquired through practice and many students simply don't have the time to write on their own, so they need to get this experience in the classroom."

"I think it would be nice to see a wider variety of literature. It seems BSC does a nice job with American and British Literature, but there needs to be more contemporary writing. I would like to see more narratives and African-American writing, while it would be nice to see and read essays and autobiographies. Good program overall."

Creative Writer Joins Faculty



Asst Professor Jerald Walker

Your interests include African American literature and creative writing. Which writers interest you most, and why?

I'm interested in African American writers whose ultimate aim is to highlight the universality of the human condition, a universality that in some way affirms life. Writers like Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, and James Alan McPherson are in this category.

Walker Interview (cont'd)

How do you approach teaching a creative writing class?

Because the best readers are the best writers, my most important job is to teach students how to be careful readers, how to approach texts with a suspicious, questioning eye.

What about a 300-level literature class?

With the assumption that the students really want to be there. In other words, with very little policing on my part, and a lot of participation on their part.

What will you teach in 2003-4?

An upper-level course called Writing the Short Story, as well as a seminar on Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray. Also, I'll be teaching a "Learning Community" course with an Art professor, Dr. Brenda Molife. Dr. Molife will teach the art of African Americans, while I will teach the literature. Working with her should be fun. I hope so, anyway, considering we're married and have to live together.

What other new courses would you like to develop?

Af. Am. Drama, Af. Am. Autobiography, Af. Am. Women Writers, Af. Am. Short Story, and Advanced Fiction Writing.

What do you like best about teaching at Bridgewater?

The students. Hands down. They're fighters, full of grit and determination. Perhaps this has something to do with the working class background that many of them share, a background about which I know a great deal, having been born and raised in one of Chicago's more impoverished neighborhoods.

What do you do after work?

Anything that involves being with my sons, Adrian, who's two and a half, and Dorian, who's six months. We particularly like to watch my tape of the Bears clobbering the Patriots in the '86 Super Bowl.

Student Does Radio Station Internship



This past summer I had the privilege of interning at radio station WBSM in the Southeastern Massachusetts area. I had worked at newspapers before—and so I understood how to work under a deadline—but I had never done any work in electronic media. I was eager and I was nervous.

The office was tiny but active; it was packed with technology. I wondered if I would be recording a newscast or landing a plane. The room was full of knobs, switches and dials, while paper and books covered the desks. One computer delivered news stories from around the globe while another was used for compiling stories from our little corner of the world. The phones rang often.

The first half of the hour was downtime, usually spent in jokes and conversation, but as the top of the hour approached (newscast time), the pace quickened and the conversation was put on hold. The array of toys would be spun and pressed, keyboards would click fervently, all aimed at a five-minute presentation to the ears of thousands. As with print journalism, the deadline is a frantic collection of information—sound bites from policemen and politicians, “copy” from newspapers and The Associated Press, all falling under the motto of “write tight.”

This summer I learned that radio news wants an economy of words, usually compiled in the nick of time. You don't need to be Shakespeare, yet you need to be able to keep your cool under pressure. And once you see behind the curtain – the workings of these personalities and their presentation – your approach to the media should take on a much more insightful perspective.

By Sean McCarthy



Writing Studio Staff, 2002-2003

Letter from the Chair of the English Department



Let me begin by thanking all of you who took the time to share your thoughts regarding the English major through our survey. It is partly through such feedback that faculty can work to improve the program. I would like to respond to your ideas and concerns.

I'll start with your concern that EN 203, Writing About Literature, wasn't offered often enough and students not advised about its importance. Primarily through advising, teachers now talk to students about the importance of taking this course early in the major as it is our gateway course. Also, we regularly offer four sections each semester.

You may have noticed as well a wider variety of literature courses in terms of the geographic, ethnic, gender, and period concerns you mentioned. Some examples since fall 2000: Postcolonial Literature and Theory; Irish Drama; Irish Women Writers; and a seminar on Women of Color in the 20th Century. In the future, look for courses such as African American Drama and the African American Short Story. Seminars on Youth and Aging in Literature; Modern European Fiction and Literary Theory; and Alfred Hitchcock and His Successors rounded out courses that did not focus exclusively on British or American authors.

The English Department has also seriously considered majors' desire for a wider variety of writing courses. New topics have included: Advanced Literary Non-Fiction; Gender and Writing; Writing Across the Curriculum; Reading, Writing and Imagination; and Rhetoric of Presidential Campaigns. Next year, if budgets allow, we are hoping to hire two new writing specialists. Additionally, the department approved a restructuring of the Writing Concentration, which includes a new exit course, Advanced Portfolio Workshop.

This restructuring was done under the direction of Dr. Lee Torda, our Writing Program Administrator. Dr. Torda promotes writing both within the English Department and throughout the wider campus community. This year she has put together a three part English Department/Writing Program Spring Reading Series for which students have been invited to submit pieces of their work. English faculty certainly hope you plan to participate and attend! She also plans to meet with the Writing Committee to discuss the possibility of occasionally hiring a professional writer to teach courses such as Publishing and Script Writing.

In closing, let me assure you as Chair that I am always available to hear your concerns and suggestions. Faculty and majors working together can only create a stronger program of study. I offer my very best wishes for your continued academic success and a positive, enriching experience as an English major at Bridgewater State College.



The English Update

English Majors To Present Research at NCUR

Four BSC English majors—Andi Abbott, Nancy Byrne, John Tormey, and Glen dePointbrand published and read from their work as part of the proceedings of the National Conference of Undergraduate Research. Mr. Tormey presented a memoir of his time working as a laborer on Boston's Big Dig. Ms. Abbott's project, sponsored by the ATP Summer Research grant, explored the phenomenon of public self-disclosure in diaries, particularly online diaries. Both students were mentored by Dr. Lee Torda.

Ms. Byrne, mentored by Dr. Garland Kimmer, explores the image of the female as a captive deprived of sight, both literally and metaphorically, in Irish literature. Also mentored by Kimmer, Mr. dePointbrand examines the evolution over time of both theme and cinematic devices in Oscar Wilde's play "The Importance of Being Ernest."

Prison Internship (cont'd)

Lee Torda, in English. "We sort of tag team," said Torda, who said she hopes internships will soon count toward departmental credit.

Even without credit, though, Hassan has benefited from the experience. "Now I can envision exactly where everything happened and incorporate my interpretation of the visit into my piece. This writing experience is giving me knowledge of the collaborative nature of real world writing and a taste of copyright issues."

Specialist in Asian American Literature Joins Faculty



Professor Katherine Lee

Your scholarship focuses (in part) on Asian American literature. Which writers in this group interest you most, and why?

Asian American literature has a tendency to be serious in tone since it's often concerned with weighty issues and historical events, such as Japanese interment. So I'm particularly fond of Gish Jen and Ruth Ozeki, because they deal with complicated topics, such as cross-cultural exchange, biraciality, and the influence of popular culture, but do so in a humorous manner.

What literary and/or cultural theorists have influenced you the most?

The theorists who've most influenced me are scholars who can "unpack" the dense relationship between issues of identity (race, gender, class, nation, and so on) as they circulate in any given text: Anne McClintock, Judith Butler, Sander Gilman. They also devote themselves equally to studying popular cultural texts and literature, which is something I try to do in my own scholarship.

How would you describe your approach to teaching a 300-level class for majors?

I have high expectations for our majors because, well, they're majors. They've chosen to study literature and should devote the necessary time and effort to truly understanding the literature and writing papers. I'm a facilitator in these classes; I offer different ways to start thinking about the readings and provide historical, social, and critical contexts.

What will you teach next year?

This fall I'll be teaching Asian American Women Writers, which looks to be a very cool class, and a section of non-Western literature which will include students from abroad who will hopefully share their own cultural insights. I think everyone in that class will learn from one another, as well as from the literature.

What new courses would you like to develop?

A course on children's lit, especially those books that deal with race. When I was a kid there was no such thing as Asian American children's lit, and very little African American children's lit, but now a wealth of books exist.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

Well, I'm a geeky professor, so I like to read, though I'm not always reading academic materials (*Us* magazine is a favorite). I'm also a fan of HBO: *The Sopranos*, *Sex and the City*, *Oz*, and spend way too much time watching sports (go Hoosiers!). I've been watching a lot of Celtics games and have grown fond of Tommy Heinsohn.