

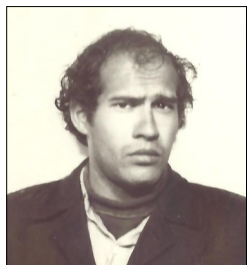


English Department Newsletter

University of Southern Maine



A Fond Farewell to Retiring Professors



A few years ago in Stratford-Upon-Avon I bumped into one of Professor **Rick Abrams'**

former students. She had made the pilgrimage because Professor Abrams' class had turned her into a lifelong lover of Shakespeare. Professor Abrams' scholarship on *The Tempest*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *2 Henry IV*, and the *Elegy* by W.S. have inspired many others. Professor Abrams recently won an essay competition at the Shakespeare Association of America and his essays on Shakespeare continue to get reprinted. But as students and scholars who have had the delight of learning subject matter from Dante to Dylan are well aware, Rick's vast knowledge is not limited to Shakespeare. Indeed, even his colleagues have yearned to enroll in his Dante course because they know that when Rick gets passionate about a topic, a brilliant lecture or piece of scholarship is not far behind.

Professor Rick Abrams is retiring after 36 years but we anticipate that his passions will continue to proliferate and circulate in classrooms and conferences around the world. Or, to borrow a line from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, we might say he is like a bur—he shall stick.

Kathleen Ashley started professing at USM in 1978. In her long, rich career as a teacher, scholar, and university citizen, Professor Ashley has received numerous awards, but those awards merely gesture at the extent of her connections to her students, colleagues, and community. In 2011, USM formally recognized the breadth of her contributions to the university by naming her Distinguished Professor of English, one of the highest honors accorded to full professors at USM. As a Distinguished Professor, Dr. Ashley embodies the best of a faculty member's work, the "sustained individual excellence" in which we find "exceptional scholarly and instructional leadership, especially across a wide disciplinary or interdisciplinary range." Those who have been fortunate to study with Professor Ashley always note her discipline, her attention to student development, and her good humor. She is viewed internationally as one of the world's leading scholars of the Medieval world, one who brilliantly guides us through the fascinating realms of saints, sinners, and the petty bourgeois. Her enthusiasm and deep knowledge of this field, as well as her studies of autobiography and



continued on page 2



Professor **Di-anne Benedict** joined the USM faculty in 1984, after teaching at Ohio University, Syracuse University, and the University

of Iowa's Iowa Writer's Workshop. For more than thirty years she has been a tireless mentor to creative writing students. Her exquisite ear and generosity of spirit have inspired countless students.

Always a writer's writer, Professor Benedict's prose is gin-clear and spare. Her work is often fascinated with the delicate border between beauty and malevolence. Many of her stories deal with the interdependence of myth and fate, especially in the small towns and hamlets where her stories are set. She is an heir to Sherwood Anderson and Flannery O'Connor.

Over the course of her career, Professor Benedict developed much of the creative writing curriculum, culminating with the creation of the Writing Minor. Her award-winning story collection, *Shiny Objects*, is still read and her recent work continues to find homes in important journals like *Fiction* and *North American Review*.

An internationally renowned scholar of T.S. Eliot Studies, Modern Poetry, and Modernism, Professor **Nancy Gish** joined USM in 1980 and soon became one of the most productive and engaging professors in the university. She taught at the University of Pennsylvania before joining USM and is the author of four books: *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot* (with Cassandra Laity), Cambridge University Press (2004); *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet* (editor), National Poetry Foundation, University of Edinburgh Press (1992); *The Waste Land: A Poem of Memory and Desire*, Twayne's Masterwork Studies (1988); and *Time in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, Macmillan (1981).

Professor Gish sums up her teaching philosophy thus: "love your students, expect the best from them, and take nothing less." And over the years, she did exactly that to great effect. Her students appreciate and publicly express the profound impact of Professor Gish's teaching on their academic learning and on their personal and professional lives as well.



continued on page 2

Alumni News

Hello USM English!

It's been some 30 years. In that time, I have . . . been very thankful for the broad humanities education I received at USM, from and with some of the same folks who are still there (Rick Abrams, Hard-A Ashley, Rayne Carroll, and Nancy Gish). To my dismay, I've seen USM in the news recently, but happily the controversy put me in touch with Professor Gish again, thanks to her wonderful *Portland Press Herald* editorial of March 17, 2014. I'm sure you felt as I did reading that piece—"this woman was my teacher!"—and for me the sentiment had redoubled force insofar as, only days before, I had myself made a public defense of the humanities at Regis University, where I teach in the English Department. Nancy's editorial brought home, with a flash of recognition, just how deep the sources of my own commitments to English literature and humanities education lie. With the exception of a few years in law book and business directory publishing (a position I landed thanks to another USM English grad, Dana Wilde), I have remained in English studies since my undergraduate days. I started graduate school at Duke University but finished

continued on page 2



Faculty Lecture Series



In October, Professor Jane Kuenz presented a lecture titled “Sin City: Las Vegas and the Culture of Surveillance” in which she used examples from Las Vegas to discuss our acculturation to constant visibility.

In November, Professor Lisa Walker presented a lecture titled “Taking the ‘Maine Chance’: Elizabeth Arden and the Invention of New England” in which she discussed the beauty industry and its impact in Maine and New England.



In April, English Professor Lorraine Carroll and Economics Professor Joseph Medley presented a lecture titled “Draining Blood Energy: Destruction of Independent Production and the Creation of Migrant Workers in Post-Reform China.”



Bruhn, continued from page 1

at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, where I received both my MA and Ph.D. A year later (1996) I won a tenure-track position for a generalist in English at Regis University in Denver, CO, where I have taught ever since and now chair the English department. This past year, I was appointed the Chester Alter Professor at Regis, in which capacity I gave the aforementioned talk on the enduring values of liberal arts education. (If you’re interested and you’ve got an hour, you can watch it on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUNMF9ezfzo>.) My research focuses chiefly on Romanticism (thanks, Professor Frank Canner!) and on literary cognition, and my recent publications include a special double issue of *Poetics Today* on “Exchange Values: Poetics and Cognitive Science” (2011) and *Cognition, Literature, and History*, a collection of essays co-edited with Donald Wehrs (Routledge, 2014).

USM’s Department of English not only provided me with an excellent preparation for the career I’ve just outlined, but also introduced me to the ideal partner with whom to pursue it, Kelley Young (English, 1985). She, too, is another life-long laborer in the vineyards of English studies (middle and high school), and our grown children are likewise pursuing humanities careers, one in French literature and the other in film. Does the study of English make an appreciable difference in human lives and history? It certainly has in ours, and for us it all began, I’m proud and grateful to say, at USM. Best wishes to the students, faculty, and staff of English, past and present.

Mark Bruhn, Chester Alter Professor and Chair
Department of English, Regis University

O’Brien Poetry Event

The Department of English hosted the annual O’Brien Poetry Event on November 14, 2014 featuring poet Jamaal May. May’s book, *HUM*, was the 2014 winner of the American Library Association’s Notable Book Award. A three-time Rustbelt Regional Slam champion, May is a rising star in American poetry. “Jamaal May is an unflinching poet, and his thrumming poems are as wild as electricity,” commented Justin Tussing, USM associate professor of English and Stonecoast MFA in Creative Writing Interim Director. Betsy Sholl, Maine’s 2006 Poet Laureate, called May “a poet of complexity and emotional depth, who sees into the heart of urban America and makes music that grieves and celebrates as well.”



Ashley, continued from page 1

African-American literature, have enriched English, American and New England Studies, and Women and Gender Studies for decades, and, in her appointments as a Visiting Professor and Fulbright Scholar, she has shared her insights with many students outside our own campus. While her colleagues in the English Department attest to her dedication to the quality and rigor of the English Major, particularly in her insistence on clear, cogent writing, we also note her many years of quietly overseeing the study abroad program, serving as advisor to the *Free Press*, taking on many independent study students, particularly in journalism, and her commitment to the heart of our work, the English Department curriculum. We will miss Professor Ashley’s profound knowledge of her fields, her intellectual curiosity, her generosity as a mentor and her great good cheer. We wish her much joy as she continues to weave her already gorgeous tapestry.

Gish, continued from page 1

for more than a decade. She continues to be a regular participant and actor in Acorn Production’s workshops and Naked Shakespeare, which offers free performances for public audiences; she was a panelist on Maine Public Television’s Public Opinion and guest lectured at the Portland Opera Repertory.

Over the course of her career, Professor Gish gained numerous academic honors and accolades: Honorary Fellow of the Association of Scottish Literary Studies; NEH Fellow; Visiting Scholar, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, England; Russell Chair in Education and Philosophy; Trustee Professorship; Outstanding Feminist Faculty. She was invited to become a member of the International Association of University Professors of English, and has an award named after her in the Women and Gender Studies program.

Professor Gish’s record of excellence in scholarship, rigor in teaching, and service to the community cements her reputation as a beloved and highly regarded teacher and colleague at USM. She will be missed.

Scholarship Winners



Dean's Scholarship and Maroon Scholarship 2015 - Noah Codega Coming to USM as a nontraditional student, I didn't think I'd do half as well as I have or have half as much fun. The English language, in all of its forms and formats, its endless avenues of expression, its inexhaustible capacity for intrigue and hilarity, means a great deal to me, and I've been fortunate to study it under the remarkable faculty of USM. I've learned more about the effective usage of this wonderful language in my three and a half semesters here than I had in my life up until my freshman year, and I plan to continue my delvings, both at USM and for the rest of my physical tenure on the planet. To be recognized with these two scholarships is an unexpected and incredible honor and a great financial help for the coming year, for which I'm immensely grateful.

Sawyer Scholarship 2015 - Emily Lambert Studying English at the University of Southern Maine has been a wonderful experience! I'm learning so much about the power of language, literature, theory, and culture at the University. The professors are very friendly and intelligent people who actually want to engage with their students and get to know them. Being a non-traditional transfer student, and receiving the C. Elizabeth Sawyer Scholarship award, is an encouraging and humbling experience. Being recognized by the professors, and receiving the scholarship, means that I will be able to continue pursuing my Bachelor's Degree in English. I intend on using the skills I've acquired at the University to teach, write, and help children and animals. Studying English has opened many opportunities for my future, and I feel truly blessed to be able to continue studying with the professors and students at USM.



Treworgy Scholarship 2015 - Caleb Lincoln Scholarships; pretty exciting stuff. Instead of talking about the scholarship—which don't get me wrong is awesome—I want to talk about the English department. Really I just want to say thank you. The support the faculty and staff in the English department have shown the students and each other over these past few tumultuous years is pretty awesome. Being a part of this English department has been a wonderful experience. Thank you. As for the scholarship, I plan to put the money toward my semester abroad in the Netherlands or towards a bitchin' Camaro. Who can know these things? That is all.

Jandebeur Scholarship 2015 - Charity Kaiser In my time here at USM, I have been impressed with the level of dedication, commitment, and interest expressed by the faculty in the English department. It holds great significance to me to be recognized by a group of professors that I have high respect for. I am honored to be this year's recipient of the Barbara C. Jandebeur Memorial Scholarship. As a nontraditional student, there are many hurdles I have had to overcome. Being a mother to five children, I have had to find a way to balance school with my family life. The support and encouragement I have received from the faculty in the English and Education departments have aided in my success. I am extremely satisfied with my experience here at USM, and look forward to my final two years.



Carbonneau Scholarship 2014 - Terri Plummer Last summer, I was thrilled to attend the Stonecoast Writers' Conference as the recipient of the Richard W. Carbonneau, Jr. Scholarship. This is a program that I have always wanted to attend but never had the guts or finances to do it. I am so grateful for the opportunity to attend this past summer and for working with so many talented writers, both students and instructors. I had the privilege of working with Lily King in the Novel Writing workshop along with eleven other workshop participants. I have never felt confident about my writing, and this week brought out my insecurities in a big way, but Lily's patient instruction as well as the encouragement of other writers went a long way in helping me to overcome some of those insecurities. The instruction was excellent, the guest speakers were encouraging, and being in the company of other writers was invaluable. I will never forget the lessons learned at Stonecoast Writers' Conference, and the relationships formed in that short week will last me a lifetime.

Faculty Publications and News

Professor Rick Abrams' recent essay on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, "'The Name of Prosper': A Philological Engagement," was published in the *Review of English Studies*. The Oxford University journal styles itself "The Leading Journal in English Literature and Language" on the basis of article-selectivity and two-year citation-rate. Professor Abrams additionally had two previously published essays on *The Tempest* newly and separately anthologized.

The editors at Ashgate have reviewed the books they have published over the years and have chosen those they think made the most impact on their fields. **Professor Kathy Ashley's** book, *Being a Pilgrim: Art and Ritual on the Medieval Routes to Santiago* (2009) is one of those selected. To celebrate the continuing significance of the book, Ashgate will highlight *Being a Pilgrim* on their website with background information about the writing and reception of the book.

Professor Ben Bertram published "Webster's Geometry; or, The Irreducible Duchess" (*English Literature* 1:1, 2014).

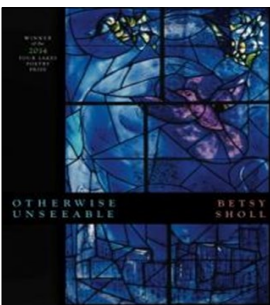
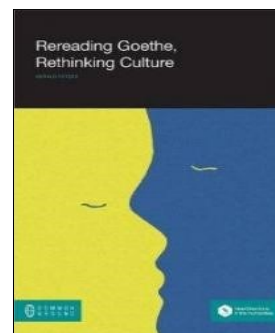
Professor Lucinda Cole has been named as one of two founding general editors of a new book series to be published by Pennsylvania State University; entitled *AnthropScene*, the series explores relations among literature, science, and ecology. She delivered a paper entitled "Shaftebury's 'Virtuoso Science' and the Biopolitical Turn" at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Annual Meeting in March. Her essay "Animal Studies: The Nature of the Beast" is forthcoming in *Literature Compass* 12, published by Wiley-Blackwell.

Professor Lisa Giles was awarded a small grant from the Michael Burke Professional Development Fund "for use in curating and presenting a poetry reading." The reading, "Island, Garden, Marsh," took place April 30, 2015, in the USM Planetarium. Slides of local landscapes accompanied the reading.

Professor Jane Kuenz presented papers at the Popular Culture Association in New Orleans and the American Studies Association in Los Angeles. Her manuscript for *Strip Cultures* was accepted by Duke University Press and will be released in October

Professor Gerry Peters published *Rereading Goethe, Rethinking Culture* (2014) an interpretation of Goethe's bildungsroman Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship in the light of contemporary culture. He presented a paper on "Goethe and the American Social Imaginary" in the Transnational Utopian Literature panel at the NeMLA Conference in Toronto in April.

Professor Eve Raimon is the principle investigator on a \$75,000 grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) on behalf of the African American Collection of the Maine Advisory Committee. It is intended to support a 17-month planning effort to develop educational kits from the collection for use by educators and the general public. She is also the facilitator for the Maine Humanities Veterans' Book Group at the Togus VA Center in Augusta.



Professor Betsy Sholl, retired adjunct professor of English, published a book of poetry titled, *Otherwise Unseeable*, and was the 2014 winner of the Four Lakes Poetry Prize from the University of Wisconsin Press.

Professor Shelton Waldrep served as USM's Trustee Professor this year while he completed his book *Future Nostalgia: Performing David Bowie*. Portions of that work were presented at the Thirty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the Society for Utopian Studies, Montreal, October 25, 2014, and the Forty-Fifth Annual Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference, New Orleans, April 1, 2015. An early version of one chapter of the book was also published as "The 'China Girl' Problem: Reconsidering David Bowie in the 1980s" in *David Bowie: Critical Perspectives*. Eoin Devereux, et al., editors. London: Routledge, 2015. (Part of the series *Routledge Studies in Popular Music*.) Professor Waldrep also published the essay-review "Reading in the Round" in *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 55.2-3 (2014). He was a Guest Lecturer for Mr. Mark Bickford's class Gender in Nineteenth-Century Fiction at Waynflete School. Professor Waldrep presented a paper on his next project, on Stanley Kubrick, James Bond, and the pictorial in film, at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies in Montreal, March 25, 2015. He was interviewed by *The Wall Street Journal* and *Periódico Reforma* (a national newspaper in Mexico). He refereed books and manuscripts for *HARTS & Minds*, *The Journal of American Culture*, and Bloomsbury.

