



English Department Newsletter

University of Southern Maine



English Dept. Receives Title III Grant

The Department of English received a USM Title III High Impact Practice Program Grant to help faculty re-examine how we teach ENG 245 Introduction to Literary Studies, the “gateway to the Major” course. As the foundational offering in the major, ENG 245 is designed with a series of consequential course objectives that all majors should reach. These objectives include:

- improvements in critical reading and writing
- a beginning understanding of critical theory and approaches to literary criticism
- an understanding of the history of English Studies, and
- research practices (among others).

With so much at stake—and under discussion—faculty seek to keep the course’s focus and still revise it to keep pace with the scholarship in our fields.

With this grant we invited two well-known scholars who offered expertise in areas not covered in our current curriculum.



Dr. Karen Raber

In March, Dr. Karen Raber, from the University of Mississippi, spoke about eco-criticism and its mul-

tiple theoretical strands, particularly as it applied to Renaissance scholarship. In April, Dr. Siobhan Senior, from the University of



Dr. Siobhan Senior

continued on page 2

Meet Our New Faculty



Professor Alex Irvine is a Lecturer in English and coordinator of the program in Gaming and Simulation

Design. He has written or done story development on a dozen or so games, including *Marvel Avengers Alliance*, *The Walking Dead: Road to Survival*, and the pioneering Alternate Reality Games known as *The Beast* and *I Love Bees*. He also writes fiction and comics, and has published about forty books including novels *Buyout* and *The Narrows*, as well as a number of movie novelizations and other licensed works. He is currently working on *The Comic Book Story of Baseball*, an interactive novel called *Powers That Be*, and several other projects.



Professor Jessica Ouellette is an Assistant Professor of English, a member of the Women and Gender Studies Council, and the Director of Writing Programs. She received her Ph.D. in English with specializations in Rhetoric and Composition and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

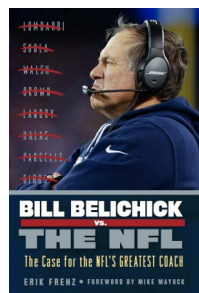
Professor Ouellette’s teaching and research areas include feminist rhetorical studies, digital rhetoric, globalization, and transnational studies. In addition to publishing essays on

continued on page 2

From the Alumni Front...

Alec Fisher (2017) had his article, “Property Lines: Territorialization and the Renaissance Country House Poem,” published in the Fall 2016 edition of *UC Berkeley Comparative Literature Undergraduate Journal*. <https://ucbcluj.org/property-lines-territorialization-and-the-renaissance-country-house-poem/>

Erik Frenz’s (2008) book, *Bill Belichick vs. the NFL: the Case for the NFL’s Greatest Coach*, was published by Triumph Books in October, 2016.



Benjamin Rybeck (2009) gave a standing-room only reading from his first novel, *The Sadness*, at Longfellow Books in Portland on July 21, 2016. Ben’s novel is set in Portland, Maine.

Current Student News

Nat Baldwin’s book, *The RED BARN*, was published by Calamai Press (http://www.calamaripress.com/Red_Barn.htm). His book was #4 on the Small Press Distribution list of Best-seller Fiction in March/April, 2017.



Reilly Sullivan, has been awarded an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) Fellowship. The UROP at USM awards funding to undergraduate projects in any discipline. UROP is a scholarly fellowship that brings together diverse areas of undergraduate student research and creative activities. It is a program for student-faculty collaboration with tremendous mutual intellectual and professional development benefits. She will be working with Professor Walker.

Machias native **Erik Squire** is this year’s Maine Policy Scholar. Squire is an English major who plans to become a high school English teacher. As part of the scholar program, he will work with Professor Travis Wagner, a professor in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy, to research policy challenges to improving Maine students’ achievement rates in literacy and math. For more info: <http://usm.maine.edu/publicaffairs/usm-names-squire-maine-policy-scholar>

Faculty Lecture Series

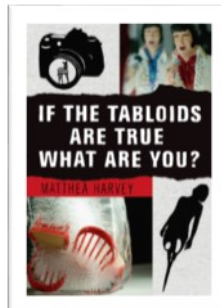


In December, **Professor Alex Irvine's** (see bio on page one) lecture "Level Up: How Game Design Skills Will Help You Rule the World" gave an overview of the new gaming studies program at USM. In the US alone, more than 150,000 people work in video game design, development, and publishing. He discussed how an interest in games could translate into a career and spoke about how USM's new game design program (still in beta) can help you do just that.

In April, **Professor Jessica Ouellette's** (see bio on page one) lecture "Rhetorics on the Move: Feminist Action in Digital Spaces" spoke about how digital media has transformed global communication, information-sharing, and knowledge dissemination. Drawing from her research, Professor Ouellette explored how these transformations have profoundly altered the ways in which we engage in writing and rhetorical practices, and how we might leverage this new rhetorical landscape in service of social action.



2016 O'Brien Poetry Event



The Department of English hosted the annual O'Brien Poetry Event on October 14, 2016 featuring poet Matthea Harvey. Harvey is the author of five books of poetry—*If the Tabloids are True What Are You?*, *Of Lamb* (an illustrated erasure with images by Amy Jean Porter), *Modern Life* (a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and a New York Times Notable Book), *Sad Little Breathing Machine* and *Pity the Bathtub Its Forced Embrace of the Human Form*. She has also published two children's books, *Cecil the Pet Glacier*, illustrated by Giselle Potter and *The Little General and the Giant Snowflake*, illustrated by Elizabeth Zechel. She teaches poetry at Sarah Lawrence and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

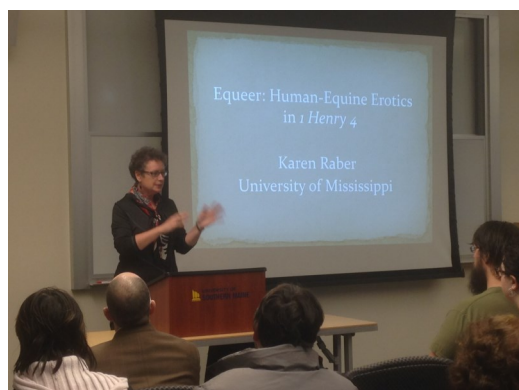
Ouellette, continued from page 1

transnational feminist rhetorical methods and digital rhetoric, she is currently working on a book project involving a transnational feminist study of the relationship between global rhetorics, affect, and digital circulation.

Title III, continued from page 1

ty of New Hampshire, spoke about Native and Indigenous Studies, particularly situated in New England. Both professors taught in Professor Carroll and Swartz's ENG 245 classes and gave a public lecture. Dr. Raber's talk was about "Equeer: Human-Equine Erotics in Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV" and Dr. Senier's talk was about "Dawnland Voices: Reading and Archiving Writing by Indigenous

People." We are already seeing some of the effects of their visits. For example, Professor Bertram's Fall seminar on Renaissance Beasts demonstrates how important posthumanism, Animal Studies, and eco-critical approaches can be in our curriculum. The English Department Faculty are currently working



on revising ENG 245, including the incorporation of Native texts in that course as well as other upper-division courses.

As we move forward, the Department of English will continue to review and re-envision ENG 245, and we welcome student contributions to the discussion.



Scholarship Winners



C. Elizabeth Sawyer Scholarship 2017 - Nathaniel Baldwin The humanities offer the critical thinking skills and intellectual engagement necessary to confront issues of systemic violence and oppression that are too often ignored in our society. In an age when our country has elected an openly racist, misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic, ableist, climate change-denying, megalomaniacal clown as our 45th president, we need the humanities more than ever. I am so grateful to the English Department for activating my intellectual interests through a rigorous examination of the literature, philosophy, history and culture that has helped shape the political realities of our world. The far-right is currently launching an organized attack against the university system and its radical thinkers and antiracist professors, in hopes to destroy any attempts of critique that challenge the elite's quest for sustained power. If the recent election gave us anything positive, it is the wake up call that we do not live in a post-racial society and that ignoring the problem only creates a cover for the continuum of white supremacy. As humanities students immersed in critical thought, we are prepared to break through the silence, stand in solidarity with the oppressed and fight to kill the vile ideas that uphold white supremacy until those ideas are buried deep in the ground. I am thankful to the inspiring professors in the English Department for recognizing me for this scholarship, as well as to my fellow classmates for sharing their unique experiences and ideas in the classroom. We may be no match for the violence of global capitalism as it rapidly annihilates the earth, but we must maintain hope that an alternative is possible. At the very least, it is truly a fascinating time to be alive.

Virginia Weaver Scholarship 2017 - Nacoma Gray When I first arrived at the University of Southern Maine, I had only one goal in mind: to become an elementary school teacher. Along the way, the English Department has allowed me to develop the new interests of analyzing text and writing analytical essays. The faculty members of the English Department have consistently made themselves available to work through my ideas, help me develop my papers, and talk with me about my future goals; they have provided so much more than I ever anticipated. Going forward, I will use the skills I have developed to teach the young minds of the next generation. It is essential to set up a strong foundation for students to learn and provide them with the tools to make great strides in their education. Along with the skills and the relationships I have formed, I am confident that my experiences with the English Department have strengthened my ability to teach moving forward.



USM Classics Scholarship 2017 - Ashley Pierce As a child I was always under the impression that I would be a librarian when I grew up. I lived most of my life in and out of libraries, reading books and looking for others to love. When I reached high school I realized that becoming a librarian may not be what I wanted to do, so I changed career paths about every six months. I eventually settled on becoming a writer, which I should have recognized before. But I've never been great at achieving these life-altering discoveries until the last minute. Which led to how I actually found USM. I was a student at a community college in Oregon searching for a four year university. It took me two years to settle on the New England area, particularly Maine. I found USM while looking for a school where I could get a degree as a sign language translator, however, I learned that sign language is not something I excel at. So I moved on to English, the major I'd been avoiding because it was supposedly impossible to do anything with. I've since decided that achieving the impossible is much easier to do than most people realize. The English Department is full of helpful professors and advisors who helped me find the right major and the right classes for me. My first year at USM has been great so far and I look forward to the rest of my time here. I'm so thankful to have been chosen as the recipient for the USM Classics Scholarship.



Jordan Maroon Scholarship 2017 - Erik Squire I'm a third year English-Education major at USM having transferred from SMCC. I am a husband and a father to a 14 month old girl, and I want to teach high school English after I graduate from USM. Choosing this major was important to me because literacy is the cornerstone of everything we do in life, and to be able to help my future students in becoming more than proficiently literate would mean the world to me. I eventually want to go into education reform, and the information that I'm learning at USM—as well as the opportunity to be USM's "Maine Policy Scholar" this year—is such an amazing addition to my professional development. I am also very grateful for having been chosen as the recipient of the Jordan Maroon Scholarship.

CAHS Annual Scholarship 2017 - Cree West After entering USM as an undeclared major, I "settled" on English because I couldn't think of anything else I was interested in. I've always loved reading and writing, but never thought of it as something I would pursue on a higher academic level. Three years into my degree, and I am thrilled that English is my major. The professors I have engaged with have altered my life forever, and I am eternally grateful for the experiences I have had through USM. During the fall of 2016, I studied abroad in Galway, Ireland; which was the most life altering and bewildering experience I have ever had. I would never have ended up there without the support and assistance of Professor Swartz, to whom I owe a great deal of my academic growth. It has been an honor to have my academic achievement recognized in such a tangible manner, and I hope to utilize the funds of the CAHS scholarship to help me save my personal earnings in the goal of moving back to Ireland. I would never have been able to have the experience of living and studying in Ireland for four months without the English Department at USM, let alone decide to move there. Endless thanks for all of the support and wisdom I have received during my time at USM, and I look forward to seeing what else will come.



Cree West on the Cliffs of Moher, Galway, Ireland

Treworgy Scholarship 2017 - Joseph Feely
Carboneau Scholarship 2017 - Samuel Walker

Faculty Publications and News

Professor Mike Bendzela's creative non-fiction piece about the Darwinian nature of farming called "The Killer Organism" has been accepted by *The Stonecoast Review* for their summer 2017 issue.

Professor Lorraine Carroll attended the Society of Early Americanists' Biannual Conference in Tulsa, OK in early March. Invited to help design a pilot community-outreach project for the Society, she worked over the past year with three other scholars in order to develop a one-day curriculum in Early American Studies for the 5th graders of the Kendall-Whittier School in Tulsa. Supported by a grant from the Oklahoma Humanities Council, the project encompassed four different units, and Professor Carroll taught 4 classes of rambunctious fifth-graders about the *New England Primer*. The students wrote their own versions of the famous alphabetical couplets to reflect their own lives and tried to imagine what life was like for colonial New England school children. One class dressed for the occasion in period costumes, each sewn by their own classroom teacher. It was a stunning experience of community support, dedicated teaching, and the actual fun you can have with a dreary, doom-laden Puritan text. That evening, Professor Carroll presented remarks about the project and the problem of civics in public schools on a panel entitled "The Public and the Past: Finding and Connecting with Early America." She also convened and chaired a diverse panel on "Early American Studies as Public and Political Interventions," and she served as respondent for a panel on Early American witchcraft studies.



Professor Gibson Fay-LeBlanc's poems appear in the most recent issues of *Poetry Northwest* and the *UMVA Journal*, as well as one forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner*.

Professor Lisa Hibl received gap funding from the Center for Collaboration and Development (CCD) to attend the Colrain Poetry Conference in April. She also received some funding from the Part-Time Faculty Association (PATFA) for this.

Professor Jane Martin has published the following short stories: "The Birdhouse," *Cimarron Review*, Winter 2016; "A Wayward Landmass," *North American Review*, Winter 2017; participated in the American Council for Québec Studies conference, panel participant, "Imperfect Belonging: The Franco-American in Québec," November, 2016; and gave the following readings: Local Buzz Café, South Portland, reading of short story, "Stay or Go," May, 2016; American Council for Québec Studies conference, "Franco Voices, Here and Now" event, reading of short story, "A Wayward Landmass," November 2016; Franco-American Centre, University of Maine, Orono, reading of short story, "The Birdhouse," April, 2017.

Professor Eve Raimon gave an invited talk this spring at a Bates College class on an essay she published in 2012 for an anthology on mockumentaries called "Making Up Mammy: Re-enacting Historical Erasure and Recasting Authenticity in Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman*." She also gave a paper at the Society for the Study of American Women Writers in Bordeaux, France on July 5-8, 2017. The conference title was Border Crossings: Translation, Migration, & Gender in the Americas, the Transatlantic, & the Transpacific. Her panel was titled "Textual Transformations: Women Writers Recycle the Past" and her paper was "The Ruination of Caliban's Daughter: Linguistic Recycling in Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*."

Professor Laima Vince Sruoginis was interviewed, on September 8, 2016, for the *Huffington Post*, "Translating Lithuanian Independence: An Interview with Laima Vince" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/loren-kleinman/translating-lithuanian-in_b_8957084.html. On March 25 and 26, 2017, her play, written in Lithuanian, *Žygis prie jūros* (A Hike at the Seashore) was performed by the Lithuanian immigrant theater group, Alternatyvai Alternatyva, at Tallaght Theatre in Dublin, Ireland. Both nights were sold out. On March 27 and 29 she read from her new novel, *This is Not My Sky*, at the Lithuanian Embassy in Dublin, Ireland and on May 4, she read from *This is Not My Sky* at the Lithuanian Consulate in New York, New York.

Professor Justin Tussing won the Book Award for Fiction for his book, *Vexation Lullaby*, at the 2107 Maine Literary Awards sponsored by the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance.

Professor Shelton Waldrep read from his latest book, *Future Nostalgia: Performing David Bowie*, at the USM Bookstore on November 30, 2016.

