



Spring 2011



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MAINE

# English Department Newsletter

University of Southern Maine

## ENGLISH STUDENTS WIN WOODROW WILSON FELLOWSHIPS

### Mary Klement



After many years and several major changes, I graduated with a BA in English on May 14th. When I started USM in the fall of 1999 (at the tender age of 29), I was determined to work full-time to support my family, take four classes per semester, and graduate in six years with an English degree. After twelve years, another child, several jobs, and countless papers, I'm DONE (and still 29). As the Grateful Dead once said, "What a long strange trip it's been."

Recently, I received the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship for Aspiring Teachers of Color. I attribute this, in part, to the time and attention I received from the English department faculty. They are caring and engaged professors who make every effort to enrich their students' lives. Everyone I have encountered has offered constructive advice, and my advisor of record became a confidant. With their help I conveyed years of knowledge to the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship selection committee. This knowledge encompassed not only an understanding of literature and writing, but a broader understanding of myself as a learner and a participant in the world at large. Our professors have taught us to understand, at a deep level, the multiple ways in which ideas can be interpreted and conveyed. Armed with experience gleaned over the years, I believe I aptly displayed the high quality of education available at USM.

Thank you everyone. Best of luck to those students still working on their degree. My best advice as you wrap up your studies: trust your professors, and advisors and, if it all seems daunting, sometimes you just have to "keep on truckin'" until you get back on the right path.

I am a Theater major and an English minor. I chose to take a fifth year of school to get my minor in English in order to have a solid foundation in one of the core subjects of education. It is important to have a strong background in at least one area of study in order to be a good teacher. The English program at USM has helped me to refine my skills as a writer and has challenged me to engage in close analysis of core texts. These challenges have helped me to better develop as a close reader and a writer.

With the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, I am planning to attend the Extended Teacher Education Program here at the University of Southern Maine and attain a Masters Degree with a focus in elementary education and English language learning. Since the program covers \$30,000 of the cost of graduate school, the burden of having to worry about other funding sources is erased, allowing me to focus on the program in order to complete my degree in two years. During my first three years as a teacher, the program will also help to provide resources and non-monetary support, which I hope to utilize in my quest to become an education professional. I hope that I can make the foundation proud, and I hope that some day I can be a great teacher, like the many I have had over the years.

### Daniel Gay



*NEW! Alumni Facebook page (see page 2)*



# "WRITING THINGS WORTH READING" AND "DOING THINGS WORTH WRITING"




## Nancy Gish

As she does every spring, Professor Gish is planning for the "Provost's Summer Writing Seminar"—an annual retreat for professors to develop and share their own and their students' writing. Like playing the pi-

ano, "writing," she emphasizes for faculty and students alike, "is a skill achieved through practice, but also like music, writing requires knowledge of fundamental units. While it is possible to play or write by ear, most musicians and writers need to learn basics first. Writing is thus both a content and a practice."

Professor Gish's fascination with and love of writing—doing it, reading it, teaching it—connects all her work. In addition to directing and teaching in the Summer Seminar, she has spent the year writing on T. S. Eliot, "Modern Women Writers in Celtic Countries," and Scottish literature, as well as presenting papers on Modernism in Malta, Glasgow, and Florence. She is currently working on an article about Liz Lochhead, Scotland's Makar (Poet Laure-

ate), whose use of language techniques parallel Shakespeare's. This work combines Gish's love of language and of Shakespeare, as she is also performing in Naked Shakespeare's production of *Cymbeline* during May. All are connected with her commitment both to great past work and to great women writers: Lochhead has said, "my country was woman," and Professor Gish finds in Lochhead's fascinating link to Shakespeare's style a continuing intersection of literary sources and contemporary culture.

And, as always, she is encouraging (nagging) her students to figure out apostrophes, put semi-colons in just the right places, learn the strategies that give writing beauty and power, and push themselves to discover and use their greatest strengths. 




## Justin Tussing

What was the best novel published by an American author in 1960? Last winter the *Cincinnati Review* asked Professor Justin Tussing to serve on a jury revisiting how the National Book Award answered that very question fifty years ago. The short list included such high school classics as *To Kill A Mockingbird* and *A Separate Peace*. All told, the jury reviewed more than a dozen books that qualified for the award. And while the two aforementioned books garnered the most attention from the jury, Professor Tussing found himself championing a "new" book, Wright Morris's *Ceremony at Lone Tree*, which he described as a "madcap reunion of misfits, malcontents, a prize pooch,

and a pair of rented mules."

The fates of schemers and agitators is a common theme in the work of Professor Tussing. His first novel, *The Best People in the World* (HarperCollins, 2006), concerns a high school dropout who journeys from Kentucky to Vermont with a former teacher and an anarchist friend. Professor Tussing

is at work on a new novel about, among other things, a famous musician's unofficial biographer and a political activist who stages Abu Ghraib reenactments in fast food restaurants.

In addition to coordinating USM's Reading Series, Professor Tussing directs USM's Stonecoast Writers' Conference ([usm.maine.edu/stonecoast\\_wc](http://usm.maine.edu/stonecoast_wc)). This summer will mark the 33<sup>rd</sup> year that the conference has connected students with talented writers and teachers from across the state and around the country. In recent years, students have traveled from as far away as France and China to work with Stonecoast Faculty. 

## FACEBOOK ALUMNI NEWS

**Lucas Ahlsen:** After graduation I banded together with Joseph Thompson and Alexander Veligor to create the Glass Jaw Fiction Company, a writing workshop that has met every two weeks for the past two and a half years. In November 2010, I was hired on as an editor for *BULL*, an independent fiction magazine. Besides that, I write short stories, and I have had two acceptances thus far, with a novella appearing at *Abyss & Apex* in July 2011. Lastly, I have a novel that's almost ready to come out of the oven.

**Charlie Nickell:** I've been living in Da Nang, Vietnam, since last August. I teach English as a foreign language at two different schools and go to the beach when it's not raining. I have another five months to go on my contract, and I'm not sure if I'll stay here or return to the US briefly before going to a new country. It's been an amazing experience thus far.

Find us on Facebook!  
USM English  
Department Alumni



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT~PROFESSOR SHELTON WALDREP

Shelton Waldrep is Professor of English at the University of Southern Maine where he teaches classes on Victorian literature, popular culture, film, and critical theory. He has written on a variety of topics, most recently on modernist and post-modernist architecture and its relationship to the temporal. He is the author of *The Aesthetics of Self-Invention: Oscar Wilde to David Bowie* (University of Minnesota Press), the co-author of *Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World* (Duke University Press), and the editor of *The Seventies: The Age of Glitter in Popular Culture* (Routledge) and *Inauthentic Pleasures: Victorian Fakery and the Limitations of Form* (SLI). His latest book is entitled *The Dissolution of Place: Architecture After Postmodernism* and is forthcoming from Ashgate. He blogs at <http://thedecadenteye.blogspot.com/>.

Some of his activities this past year included lecturing on postmodern architecture in a class taught by USM Art History Professor Kim Grant and presenting the paper "Bodies in Space: Pornography, Masculinity, and Design in Kubrick's *Later Work*" at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies in New Orleans. He also completed three interviews, served on an honors thesis committee, refereed a book on poetry writing, and organized a workshop on alternative careers for English Majors. A section of his book manuscript is due to appear in the forthcoming collection, *Contemporary Cinema and the Visual Arts* (David Gallagher, ed. London: Anthem), and he is writing a review for the journal *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*.

This past year he received three grants: a Technology-Enhanced Learning Grant

and a Course Development Grant from the Center for Technology-Enhanced Learning at USM to develop an on-line version of Independent Writing and a Faculty Senate Grant for Research, Scholarship, and Creativity to conduct research in Paris.



## ENGLISH MAJORS WIN SCHOLARSHIPS!

### *Dorothy Montgomery Scholarship - Briana Garside*

When I graduate from USM, I plan on pursuing a career in teaching high school English. I came to USM undeclared. I really had no idea what I wanted to major in, but I knew I wanted to eventually become a teacher, so I spent my first year taking cores and electives. All it took was two English classes for me to decide that I wanted to pursue it as my major.

I'm very happy with my decision to become an English major. Every new challenge that my classes bring me makes me more and more confident that I made the right choice. Getting this scholarship gives me the opportunity to take more classes next semester, which will allow me the chance to graduate a whole year early. I am very thankful

to my parents, the Dorothy Montgomery Scholarship, and the Presidential Commendation Scholarship, all of which are responsible for paying for my schooling. I would not have gotten this far in my education without their support.

### *Elizabeth Sawyer Scholarship - Mary Vaughan*

In my four years at the University of Southern Maine, I have been able to pursue a variety of interests in both academics and athletics. Knowing I could continue to play hockey and lacrosse was one of the reasons I chose USM, and I have enjoyed every second of my time here. However, after four years of balancing two sports and a full course load, I am left with a large chunk of my English degree to finish. To that end, I am a grateful recipient of the C. Elizabeth Sawyer Award so that I can afford to go to school for a few more years!

I wouldn't have gone about my experience in any other way – I've had the privilege of being a part of a few amazing teams, the most memorable so far being the 2010 lacrosse team that soared from the fifth seed to conference champions during the heat of finals week last May. With collegiate athletics winding down, I'm looking forward to continuing my English studies and using my leadership skills in teaching and coaching when I graduate.



### *Emerson College MFA Scholarship - Tamarah Smith*

Although I've received a fellowship for poetry, I did not originally think of myself as a poet; instead, I started out at USM taking a number of fiction workshops. USM's requirements allow for experimentation in the different genres, and I'm glad I was able to take advantage of the many different perspectives the faculty have to offer.

The English department faculty have stood out to me during my time at USM, and what I do in the future will be greatly influenced by their support and encouragement both in and outside of the classroom.

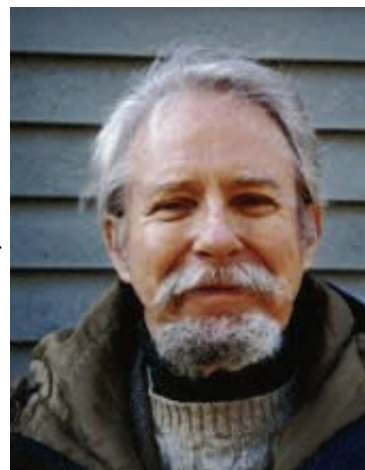
### *Rick Carbonneau Scholarship - Alicia Fisher*



## IN MEMORIAM~PROFESSOR LEE S. BAIER

---

A faculty member from 1966-1990, Professor Baier grew up in Oregon and served in the U.S. Army's 20th Armored Division in Europe during World War II. He earned a doctorate in English Literature at Columbia University in New York City and was hired by the University of Maine, Portland in 1966 three years before it merged with Gorham Teachers College to form the University of Southern Maine. His teaching specialization was the English Renaissance, with particular emphasis on the poetry of Milton. One of his scholarly amusements was finding English words used earlier than their citation in the Oxford English Dictionary. He also found joy in gardening, baroque music and devising clever puns. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Ursula Baier, his sister, Dorothy Shindler, and two sons, Matthew and Simon Baier.



---

### FACULTY PUBLICATION & NEWS

***Kathleen Ashley was appointed as USM Distinguished Professor.***

***Lucinda Cole received the 2010-2011 Faculty Senate Award for Scholarship in the Humanities.***

***Nancy Gish received the 2010-2011 Faculty Senate Award for Teaching in the Humanities.***

*Dianne Benedict* has three publications currently pending: "The Fox Pelt" in the *North American Review*, "Hawk and Garnet" in *Gargoyle*, and "The Greening" in *Redbud*. She also published "The Things that Slow the Body" in this year's *Words and Images*.

*Jaed Coffin*, a graduate and faculty member of Stonecoast MFA and adjunct instructor, sold his second book, entitled *Roughhouse Friday*, to the Riverhead imprint of Penguin Books, due out in March 2012. In the last year, he has lectured widely at Phillips Andover Academy, Deerfield Academy, Boston University's Howard Thurman Center for Race and Culture, Saint Michael's College, Berklee College of Music, University of Maine, and Florida International University. In June, *The Sun* will publish a 6000 word essay entitled "My Mother's Burning Body."

*Lucinda Cole's* special issue of *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, titled *Animal, All Too Animal*, appeared in March. That same month, she delivered a paper on Thomas Willis, the founder of neuroanatomy, at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in Vancouver, BC. Her book *Imperfect Creatures: Vermin, Literature, and the Sciences of Life, 1640-1750*, is under contract with the University of Michigan Press.

*Lisa Giles* published two of her poems in the *Spoon River Poetry Review* (winter 2010). In December, she served as a judge for the Poetry Out Loud recitations at Mt. Ararat High School (Topsham, ME). In July she will be teaching "Literature of the Sea" for the Early College Program at UNE. The class grants high school juniors and seniors three credits for a college-level class.

*John Muthyala's* "Negotiating the Challenges of Online Education: Perspectives of a Department Chair" appeared in the *ADE Bulletin* 150 (2010). The Association of Departments of English is an affiliate of the Modern Language Association.

*Linda Trombley* has been working as a volunteer for the Great Works Regional Land Trust, and recently spearheaded a fundraising effort to conserve Deb-Tone Farm on Rte. 4 in North Berwick. Because of the Land Trust's purchase of a conservation easement, the farm will remain as one piece of land, forever, in the forefront of Mt. Agamenticus. The fundraising included a yard sale, a bicycle ride, a federal grant, and voter-approved town monies. In 2001, she helped conserve nearly 100 acres on Bauneg Beg Mountain, where a short hike up the steepest trail, "Linny's Way," offers spectacular views. Both projects relied on community support, with permanent results.

*Lisa Walker's* article "The Future of Femme: Notes on Femininity, Aging, and Gender Theory" is forthcoming in *Sexualities*.

*Erika Waters* spoke at the Naples Book Festival (April 9 & 10, 2011) to the Editors Panel for Freelancers about how to "Get Intimate with your Setting." She is also publishing "Anthologizing the Caribbean" in the *Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (Routledge, May 2011), "Man, I Feel Like Reading an Epic": A Poetry Collection from the Calabash Literary Festival (Book Review) *The Caribbean Writer*, volume 25 (June 2011), and "A Risk that Succeeded/Un Risque Couronné de Succès" in *The Caribbean Writer*, volume 25 (June 2011). She is currently working on "Una Marson's Collected Poems," forthcoming in *Women's Review of Books* (fall 2011).

---

Contact Information: John Muthyala, Department Chair, 780-4780, [muthyala@usm.maine.edu](mailto:muthyala@usm.maine.edu)  
Pam LaRiviere, Administrative Assistant, 780-4117, [harjula@usm.maine.edu](mailto:harjula@usm.maine.edu)

Newsletter designed by Emma Burke, English Department work-study student.