



"People seem to have two reactions to books. Either they describe what they're about or they describe how the book made them feel. I'd much rather write the kind of book that inspires someone to describe the way it made them feel. When you're talking about the book, you're not referring to an object; you're referring to an experience."

—Jonathan Safran Foer (**Powells.com** interview, April 2006)

WELCOME BACK

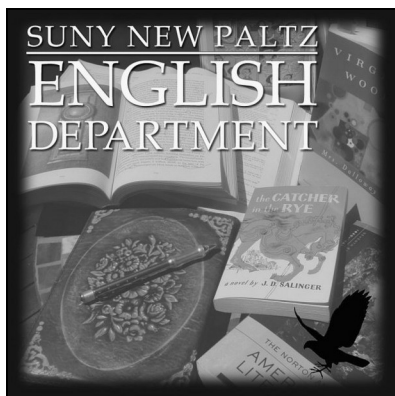
As we say goodbye to another sweltering summer, the English Department would like to issue an equally warm welcome to all its students, new and returning alike. Rest assured we have a semester brimming with speakers, conferences, and events for numerous interests and concentrations. For updates on this year's events and other departmental announcements, stay tuned to *Works Cited* throughout the semester as we faithfully keep you informed of all major departmental events. For quick updates in between issues, please visit the department's webpage at www.newpaltz.edu and our blog at englishblog.newpaltz.edu, or find us on facebook under www.facebook.com/npenglish.

All three will be updated throughout the semester with important information, along with photos and other media from past and future departmental events.

If you haven't already, please join the department in our Composition Program's common summer reading of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. A thrilling postmodern work of perspectivism that recounts the tales of a family over multiple generations, its release was mired in controversy and accusations of opportunism as it was one of the first pieces of fiction to incor-

porate the tragic events of September 11.

One Book/One New Paltz is back for another semester, featuring Dave Eggers' *Zeitoun*, a non-fiction narrative about the bureaucratic brutality following Hurricane Katrina that flourished during the government's lackluster and sometimes racist response. For those new to the department, One Book / One New Paltz is a project aimed at fostering a community atmosphere between the town and its resident students by sharing a common reading experience. It encourages participants to buy their copy locally at either Inquiring Minds or Barner Books, both located on Church Street in New Paltz. Stay tuned for



dates and other announcements, or check out the program's website at <http://sites.google.com/site/onebookonnewpaltz/>.

One final note to all graduate students who plan on taking the Comprehensive Exams: to be eligible please make sure that you are enrolled in ENG 599.01. If you are not, please email Dan Kempton at kempton@newpaltz.edu immediately. The exam will be held Saturday, October 30 at 9 a.m. in JFT 1010.

We wish you the best of luck in your academic endeavors this semester and your best year ever.

Faculty Profile: Oksana Laleko

This semester we are pleased to welcome Oksana Laleko, Assistant Professor in Linguistics and Linguistics Program Coordinator. She says her interest in Linguistics “probably grew out of my fascination with language and its power to transcend cultural or political barriers. Additional motivation came from studying structurally different languages, such as Russian, English, Swedish, Latin, Old Church Slavonic, and of course taking courses in Linguistics. It’s a fascinating field—the more you learn about it, the more interesting it becomes. Despite astonishing cross-linguistic variation, there are common properties that many languages share.”

Her journey took her from the humanities towards social and cognitive sciences, moving from literature and study of individual foreign languages to linguistics, an interdisciplinary field where the main subject of investigation is the ability of our minds to acquire, store, and process linguistic structures (rather than any particular language).

She received a joint BA/MA degree in Germanic Philology from Petrozavodsk State University, Russia. Her diploma thesis examined intertextuality and literary allusions in the works of Saul Bellow. She then received an MA in English from the University of Minnesota Duluth with a minor in Linguistics. During this time she also taught classes in Composition and Linguistics.

She then received her Doctorate in Linguistics from the University of Minnesota, specializing in syntax with additional interests in bilingual-

ism, language attrition, and heritage language acquisition. As part of her linguistics training, she did fieldwork research on Dene Suline, an underdocumented indigenous North American language spoken by the Chipewyan people.

For her PhD dissertation, she worked with second-generation Russian speakers in the Twin Cities area analyzing the linguistic outcomes of intergenerational language loss.



On teaching, she says, “Teaching is a two-way street. . . . Every semester, I learn something new from students—an interesting analogy or a great linguistic example. But you also learn how to become a better teacher.” She added that it is important to involve students in research projects, giving them an opportunity to see the work unfold,

a model of how to approach difficult tasks and obstacles, such as unpredicted results.

She recently had two new papers published, and was an invited speaker at the Fourth Summer Heritage Research Institute at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, which focused on the issues of linguistics and pedagogy in current heritage language research. Now, building on the findings of her dissertation research, she is designing a new experimental study on heritage Russian.

Her hobbies include traveling, cooking (especially testing out new recipes) and snorkeling. She related a snorkeling story: “in Key West, my husband and I had an unexpected encounter with a 5-foot shark. Fortunately, nobody got harmed, including the shark.”

Professor Laleko’s Writing Tip:

“Writing a paper for a Linguistics course may at first seem like a challenging task for an English major. Writing conventions vary greatly across the disciplines, and the writing style preferred in the Humanities does not always meet the format requirements of a paper in the Social Sciences. In Linguistics, it is common to begin by describing a puzzle or stating a specific question and presenting empirical data to illustrate the problem. After formulating a precise and objectively verifiable hypothesis, the writer describes the methodology and presents quantitative or qualitative evidence. The paper typically concludes with a discussion of the observed findings and their theoretical implications. Section numbers are used throughout the paper as organizational devices; it is also common to include a short abstract, which summarizes the paper’s hypothesis and main results. The paragraphs are typically shorter, and the writer is expected to rely on objective evidence more than on rhetoric in crafting a scientific argument. Perhaps the most difficult writing convention to get accustomed to is the use of the passive voice—a *faux pas* in the Humanities, but a standard requirement in the Social Sciences.”

Nancy Johnson Honored

On May 23, Professor Nancy Johnson was honored with the SUNY-wide Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

According to www.suny.edu, the awards are “system-level honors conferred to acknowledge and provide system-wide recognition for consistently superior professional achievement and to encourage the ongoing pursuit of excellence.”

Professor Johnson addressed the Fall 2010 Convocation as keynote speaker. Her speech, “A Revolution of the Mind,” spoke to the universality and transformative power of literature, how texts composed long ago still touch us today. She spoke of two students and the ways in which they were affected. One was drawn in and engaged by Brecht and Kafka—so much so that he moved steadily from the back row to the



front—while the other had an emotional response to Yeats's “The Second Coming,” perhaps connecting it with the experience of losing her father on 9/11. Johnson says: “Watching one of my students experience a work of literature in such a profound way caused a revolution in my *own* mind. I was reminded of the power of literature and the unique role it plays in human experience.”

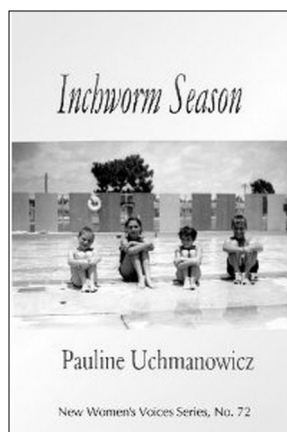
Professor Johnson's speech reflects a deep understanding of how we make meaningful connections in the Humanities.

Professor Tom Olsen, English Department Chair, commented, “Nancy Johnson is a model colleague. She is not only a wonderfully engaged member of our faculty and a first-rate scholar, but most important, she's an expert, inspiring teacher.” Congratulations, Professor Johnson!

Inchworm Season

The English Department demands constant commitment from its faculty. So when one of our own is able to produce a successful creative endeavor in addition to endless research and grading, a hearty word of recognition is the least we can do. Our hats go off to Associate Professor Pauline Uchmanowicz and her most recent collection of poetry, *Inchworm Season*. After being ranked as a finalist for the Finishing Line Press New Women's Writers series, it so impressed the judges that it was soon published.

A collection that contains pieces spanning several decades, *Inchworm Season* is a reflection of the development and maturation of an artistic perspective rarely seen in a single work. For Pauline, the “task of the poet is as a seeker—after knowledge of all kinds, both personal and universal,” and this sense of searching reverberates throughout the compilation. Despite being in flux, her iden-



tity as a poet is consistently present in her works, an essential element of her philosophy as she teaches her students to write in order “to discover who we are and who we will become.”

Preferring to keep her poetry in the form of a “well-made, short, narrative lyric,” Uchmanowicz finds inspiration in writers like Ted Kooser, Jean Follain, Charles Simic and Linda Gregg, although she cites her five siblings as her most important muses, and dedicates the work to their collective maturation as a family.

For those of who would like to hear these works read by the poet herself, Professor Uchmanowicz will be a featured speaker at the Codhill Press Poets event at the Elting Library in New Paltz on Saturday, September 18 at 7 p.m. She will also be reading at Inquiring Minds bookstore on Church Street—an excellent place to pick up a copy—on Saturday, October 16 at 7 p.m.



Briefly Noted

Poets Dennis Doherty and James Sherwood will be the featured readers when the Woodstock Poetry Society & Festival meets at the Woodstock Community Center, 56 Rock City Road, on Saturday, September 11 at 2 p.m. The event also has an open mic. More info at www.woodstockpoetry.com/events.



On Tuesday, September 28, at 3:30 p.m. in JFT 1010, the Philosophy and English Departments present Anne O'Byrne, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Stony

Brook University, who will present a talk titled "Exile from the Republic of Conscience: Seamus Heaney and the Work of the Poet," discussing Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Heaney.



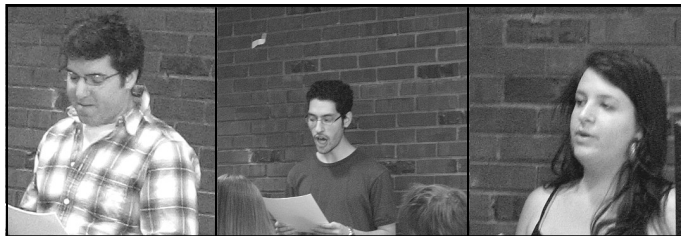
For those students needing *one* extra credit to fill out their requirements, the department offers two single-credit classes (5 sessions in 5 weeks): "Contemporary Asian Cinema," which began on August 25, and "Understanding Poetry," beginning on October 4.

Congratulations, Commendations, and Praise

On May 6, 2010 in JFT 1010 there was an award ceremony and reading for the winners of the Tomaselli Awards for Creative Writing. The winners were Shawn Rubenfeld for fiction, Ricardo Mejia for dramatic writing, and Megan Falley for poetry.

The honor is given to students in the program (majors and minors) who are in their final semester of the program and are about to graduate.

Each winner received a certificate suitable for framing and a cash prize of \$100. Congratulations, and keep writing!



S. Rubenfeld

R. Mejia

M. Falley

Outstanding Graduates for May 2010

Each year, departments select students to receive the particular honor of "Outstanding Graduate." The students' names are inscribed on bookplates in recent Sojourner Truth Library acquisitions, provided by the Friends of the STL's "Honor with Books" program, and are related to the students' areas of concentration. The students receive a copy of the bookplate and a year membership to Friends of the STL.

English Undergraduate students honored:

Nicole Hitner
Richard Harnden
Andrea Frampton
Kelsey Eriksen

Graduate students:

Corey Mittenberg
Christian Rabin

Footnotes

1. September 12 - Last day to add or drop a course without penalty.
2. September 17 - Last day to enroll in a class (with penalty). Instructor Permission required.
3. October 1 - De-registration for non-payment.
4. November 5 - End of course withdrawal period.

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