Tis the season of tradition, and we would like to honor our own by once again extending our warmest greetings to the students, faculty and staff of the SUNY New Paltz English Department, in the hope they may provide even the slightest insulation from yet another frigid winter in the Hudson Valley. Of course, one of the best defenses against the cold is remaining inside with a new book, and it just so happens that there are numerous courses still open that will provide you with the opportunity to earn credit for doing so.

Multiple sections of Expository Writing (ENG 224) have seats available, as does Professor Kuhn’s section of English Lit II (ENG 302-05), Professor Vianney-Benca’s Short Story (ENG 308-02), Digital Rhetoric (ENG 399-01) with Professor Newcomb, Professor Fenkl’s Asian Cinema (ENG 299-01), Nineteenth-Century American Literature (ENG436-01) with Professor Higgins, Professor Wyman’s Modern Drama (ENG 493-01) and Literature Across Borders (ENG 493-02) with Professor Hewett.

Should you meet with trouble in your studies at any point in the year, the on-campus Tutoring Center is ready and waiting with numerous tutors available for helpful one-on-one instruction on essay writing and individual courses. Contact the center at (845) 257-3580 for more information.

On April 6, the department will co-host “Straight Talk about Secondary Jobs” with the Career Resource Center. To receive reminders for this event and all others that will take place throughout the course of the semester, “like” the English Department on Facebook at facebook.com/npenglish, or check out our blog at http://englishblog.newpaltz.edu. Following us online will provide you with updates on upcoming English Department programs, digital media from past events and reminders concerning various deadlines.

Stonesthrow Review, the literary journal of the department, is once again calling on creative writers for submissions as early in the semester as possible. We would also like to announce the revival of our own poetry blog, These Be the Verses, which combines student-written poetry with an audio file of the authors reading his or her own work. See Briefly Noted on page four for submission details.

For those of you planning to finish up this semester, graduation applications for May 2011 are due on February 1 in the Registrar’s office in HAB 18. Graduate students planning to take the Comprehensive Exams must sign up for ENG 599 and submit the necessary paperwork to Professor Kempton (kemptond@newpaltz.edu).

Best of luck with your semester, and do your best to stay warm!
Facility Profile: Ken Moss

“Ode to Teaching”
As a child I was drawn to magic . . . the surprises of the theatre, the progressive religion of jazz and folk music, the world of wind, fire, thunder and flower, of laughing mothers and of play, until wonder became a style, a natural conduit for living, loving and learning.

As a teacher I strive to create an aesthetic in the moment. It is a sprightly spirit. A rational opening often serves as prologue—an establishment scene of literary place/time or discourse on a resonant theme to prompt positioning and discussion—until a chord is struck and the cerebral yields as it must. Suddenly as if spontaneously a song is in the air, a key passage recited, an unannounced poem disguised as speech ambles on stage candidly at first for image and meaning, a chant whose repeated line begs for choral rendering finds a group ready to engage. There’s a palpable pulse. New soloists emerge, unheard from before, but all are also faces in the choir. Sometimes a class sparkles with humor and opinion and shared glee; at others, quiet and separates for individual reflection.

Or perchance this is a day for demonstration. A wad of orange clay appears, is softened, flattened as I rant—a pawn, a bishop, a queen is wedged into the clay, removed, upheld, and then wedged again . . . pauses impress the images into memory. Here the first coins, an early ledger (I owe you this much.) There the origins of writing itself. Which way the wedge for female do you think? Which way male? Both ways at once, the six pointed star. Elohim.

At home in the green room of preparation I practice all the roles, bedfellows with the bard, comedic and tragic, basking amid beauty like Paris in an artist’s rendering (to whom would you give the golden apple, I ask, seeking values?) Socrates turning his probing queries, hanging at the mall while the young men laugh at their self-assured elders. I turn the tables. Do you believe in Honor? Wisdom? Truth? I aim to capture character by tone. Person-ified: Through sound shall ye know them. “If you will come, I will put out fresh pillows,” Sappho entices and smiles.

Teaching by narrative, rhetorical, personal, and sacred, I cast images, my face and form plastilene, age and gender malleable. Or sculpt in mise-en-scene, the leit motifs eternal—the forest entered, the river crossed, (can you hear the bass guitar?) the light in the darkness, the shadow confronted . . . embraced. A shiver in the air . . . beat . . . beat . . .

Awareness can come in a day, in a moment—or it can take years to emerge unencumbered. We will not be there to measure our effects.

We are the teachers, traveling Sophists at the core. Empowered by spontaneity and the possibility of awe, we echo great writers. We stand and spit in character, our favorite archetypes draped upon the walls, no matter the room, while hungry eyes surprised when they too see them, laugh and gasp, retreat and sometimes applaud—these inform our scripts—we pull the curtain back and forth, one moment indignant, the next all seeing, and not infrequently quite, quite blind—channeling:

Old Priam kissing Achilles’ hand. Homer said that.

“Kisses are a better fate than wisdom, lady I swear . . .” e e cummings said that.

“They teach best what they most need to learn.” Richard Bach said that. . . . Always listen to grunts, groans, sighs and whispers; the rest is only words. I say that.

Departmental Note:

Professor Kenneth Moss will retire after this semester—we thank him for his always collegial spirit and for his inspired teaching, and we all wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors.
Congratulations, Outstanding Graduates

Every semester, students of the New Paltz English program are awarded with degrees that fail to capture the full extent of their commitment and enthusiasm. Last fall proved no exception, as four students from the graduate and undergraduate programs were chosen to be recognized for their distinguished academic careers.

Former-undergraduate Laura Anne Russo (right) is currently working at a small publishing company, and hopes to remain in the industry while she continues with her education. She is thankful that “SUNY New Paltz has created many new opportunities for me.”

Also honored was Christie Michel (not pictured). A transfer student to New Paltz and a Creative Writing Major, Christie says, “I’ve really loved my time at New Paltz and value all the opportunities it has offered me.” She just returned from a trip Haiti, and is now beginning her job search while applying to Queens College for an M.A. in teaching Adult Literacy, a decision inspired by Professor Schmidt.

M.A. student Thomas Doran (left), the author of a thesis exploring “the question of animal agency in nineteenth-century literary production,” is planning to pursue a Ph.D. in English. His interests include transatlanticism, human-animal studies, and textual studies.

Natalie Lozinski-Veach (center) also plans to continue on after receiving her B.A., and says she is “currently waiting to hear back from the ten Comparative Literature Ph.D. programs I have applied to.” She also wishes to thank Dr. Stoneback and Dr. Tromanhauser for playing a key role in her success.

Kudos to all four recipients of this award!

Welcome to Our New Students!

A new semester has arrived, and with it, new faces, voices, and things to learn. Whether you are a first-year student or transferring from another campus, here are some key things to know.

Proper planning is important—you can avoid trouble in the future by being cautious now. Make sure to see your faculty advisor early in the semester, and have a look at your plan of study. If you are an Education student, you have more than one advisor; log in to my.newpaltz.edu to check.

Course and credit requirements vary, so try to look ahead to future semesters, as some courses are offered only once a year. Also be sure to have copies of all prior transcripts—New Paltz will transfer up to 90 credits from four-year colleges, and 70 credits from two-year colleges.

The campus has many resources that are often underutilized. The Sojourner Truth Library is an inviting space with lounges, a café, many public computers, and lots of books and periodicals to peruse—to say nothing of helpful librarians.

In addition to strengthening your intellect, the Athletic and Wellness Center can nourish the body. It has a swimming pool and equipment rental, from Frisbees and bocce sets, to mountain bikes and camping supplies. They also offer health assessments and personal training, free to students!

If you are simply looking for a place to “chill out,” the Student Union (with new addition pictured here) houses several venues for food, the college bookstore, billiard tables, and day lockers—particularly useful for commuter students who “camp out” for the day, but don’t want to lug all their materials around.

Last but not least, if you have questions about English requirements or the program, come visit us in the English Department! The office is located in Jacobson Faculty Tower 714, and our amazing Secretary, Ethel Wesdorp, can assist you.

Stay abreast of ongoing English department happenings by joining us on facebook.com/npenglish, and visit the blog at http://englishblog.newpaltz.edu/.
We are pleased to announce the availability of funding to support travel by undergraduate and graduate students to present, exhibit, or perform their scholarly or creative work at regional and national conferences. This aid is available through the David Lavallee Student Travel Fund. Recipients must be current junior, senior, or graduate students with a minimum GPA of 3.0. Awards will be up to $400 and will be competitive. The application deadline is February 21, 2011, for conference travel between January 24, 2011 and August 17, 2011. For instructions and materials please contact Ms. Heather Puchalski of the Office of Academic Affairs at puchalsh@newpaltz.edu, telephone 3199, or in HAB 801.

As noted on page 1, we are reviving “These Be the Verses”: student poetry (text and audio) on the department blog. We hope to expand the range of content, and since the medium lends itself to going beyond text, we would like to encourage spoken-word poets and songwriters to submit material as well. Contact Grad Assistant Thomas Faddegon at workscited@newpaltz.edu to discuss submitting your work.

Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society, will soon be sending out letters to English and English-Education majors with a 3.75 overall GPA. Students who have also completed a specified number of courses for the major, with at least a 3.75 average, will be eligible to join.

“What I’m Reading”: Stella Deen

This issue’s “What I’m Reading” comes to us from Professor Stella Deen:

Reading with children is a fringe benefit of parenting. My nine-year-old twins read large numbers of books that don’t interest me much, but we have never dropped the habit of reading something together that we all enjoy. Our reading is naturally interspersed with comments and questions, much as in a classroom. Recently we read Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Uncontrollable changes in one’s size are a frequent trope in children’s literature, so the suggestive episode in which Alice learns how to turn size-changing to her advantage represents one small triumph in the face of many indignities. We rallied around Alice as she bravely opposed reason to the non-sequiturs and literal-minded decrees of the creatures she meets; and sympathized as she strove to get along in a looking-glass world by reversing her most essential assumptions.

“Lewis Carroll didn’t care at all how unrealistic” Alice’s adventures were, said my daughter in admiration of his bold freedom. Some readers find Alice’s experiences all too realistic, but then, evoking such divergent responses of satisfaction is one sign of a great book.

Footnotes

1. January 31–February 6: Course add/drop period
2. January 31: Martin Luther King Jr. Day Observed (Classes in session)
3. February 1: Graduation Applications for May 2011 due in the Registrar’s Office
4. February 11: End of Spring 2011 registration period

Works Cited

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