The Pi Tau chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society, held its 2011 induction ceremony at the College Terrace on Sunday, April 10. Students honored with membership were joined by their guests—parents, partners, and even some children—and were individually introduced by English professors Dennis Doherty, Jackie George, Mary Holland, Nancy Johnson, Jed Mayer, Fiona Paton, Pauline Uchmanowicz, and Michelle Woods. Professor Thomas Olsen, Chair of the English Department, presided over the event and explained some of the principal goals of the group: honoring outstanding students; promoting the study and love of literature, language, and good writing; and encouraging literacy.

Immediately after students were introduced and formally inducted, student President Rebecca Van Der Jagt gave an inspiring talk with the intriguing title “Conquering the Flex Arm Hang: Praise for the English Majors that Always Meet the Bar.” In it, she lauded her fellow students who work hard, excel, and bring distinction to themselves and to the English Department.

Membership in the local chapter of Sigma Tau Delta is offered to students who hold an outstanding GPA (3.75 in both the major and overall) and who have completed at least one half of their major. It is open to Liberal Arts English majors as well as to majors combining English and either elementary or adolescence education, and to transfer students.


Congratulations to all new inductees!
Faculty Profile: Doris McCabe

It is with great regret that the English Department bids farewell to a longtime member, Professor Doris McCabe. After receiving her MA in Literature and ESL, and teaching here for over a decade, Professor McCabe is setting out for Virginia, with our best wishes.

Originally from Flushing, New York, Professor McCabe has a wonderful daughter whom she raised by working as a professional horse groomer for many years while taking graduate courses to complete her degrees. In addition to riding horses, she also practices Tai Chi, and enjoys the spiritual, physical, and mental challenges inherent in each discipline.

Professor McCabe has taught in traditional and unconventional surroundings alike, from positions at Bard College and Dutchess Community College to the Unification Church. While she normally teaches composition and expository writing, she takes special delight in the instruction of grammar because of its grounded and clearly defined subject.

As a politically enthusiastic individual interested in the roles ecology and environment play in human conflict, Professor McCabe encourages her students to “situate their topic within the greater world.” Rather than approaching exposition as merely a method of writing college papers, she aims to look beyond the ramifications of their subjects and towards their implications on human behavior itself. She believes that we have reached a point in human history unlike any other, and it is the responsibility of current and future generations to use our miraculous technology in a responsible manner. In Professor McCabe’s opinion, if we can use our technology to learn to see the world and the rest of humanity in a different light, we might avoid the fate of the world predicted in the epitaph of her beloved author, Kurt Vonnegut: “we could have saved it, but we were just too cheap and lazy.”

Many thanks, Professor McCabe. We wish you the best in all your future endeavors.

Excellent Summer Course Offerings

The department has once again lined up a spectacular offering of summer classes to keep you busy during the academic off-season.

Even if you will not be around for the summer, it is an excellent time to get your writing intensive requirement done with an online course such as Expository Writing (ENG 224), Women in Literature (ENG 230), American Women Writers of the Twentieth Century (ENG 231), Contemporary Issues and Literature (ENG 255), and The Novel (ENG 307).

If online courses are not your cup of tea, on-campus classes will be offered in Summer Session I (May 25—June 29) and Summer Session II (July 6—August 9). All four survey courses will be offered, along with Studies in Drama (ENG 310), The Bible (ENG 355), Fiction into Film (ENG 372), The Great American Road (ENG 493/02), and Shakespeare (ENG 406 and ENG 505).

For those of you who prefer the intimacy of a classroom but are burdened with busy schedules, the department is also pleased to offer two “hybrid” courses at the graduate level. Modernist Poetry (ENG 593/02) starts during Summer session I and Introduction to Graduate Studies (ENG 593/03) will begin three weeks later. Both will be conducted in a mix of classroom sessions and online assignments.

Be sure to check out the extended course descriptions at newpaltz.edu/summer and register on my.newpaltz.edu before it’s too late!
Tomaselli Award and Stonesthrow Review

Submissions for the Tomaselli Prize are accepted from students in the program (majors and minors) who are graduating in spring or fall. Three prizes are given; one winner is selected each for poetry, prose narrative, and “other genres” by a panel of three judges in the department, but who are not necessarily regular creative writing instructors. All submissions are read blind and rated on a scale, which is then tallied by Professor Dennis Doherty. The prize is a certificate suitable for framing, and a cash prize of $100 each. The winner(s) are often included in Stonesthrow Review, the publication showcasing writing from students in the Creative Writing Program.

There will be an award ceremony and reading by the winners on May 5, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. in Jacobson Faculty Tower (JFT) 1010, coinciding with the release of the 2011 issue of Stonesthrow Review. The award honors former creative writing student Vincent Tomaselli; the original money for the prize was left in his name as a legacy. The prizes are now funded through donations from The Alumni and Friends of the English Department. Come hear the winners read from their award-winning works!

23rd Annual English Graduate Symposium

This year’s English Graduate Symposium took place over two days, Friday and Saturday, April 29 and 30. The symposium was titled “Global Identities and Literary Encounters,” and it explored the impact of globalization, commerce, communication, and the interpenetration of cultures on identity formation.

The keynote was Friday evening at 4 p.m. in the CSB Auditorium. Walter Cohen, Professor of Comparative Literature at Cornell University, presented his paper “World Literature and Contemporary Fiction,” which attempted “to provide a global account of fiction since around 1940: globalization and world literature are seen as the realization of the American century, postmodernism as an original synthesis of realism and modernism. Extended examples were drawn primarily from English language texts, especially Nabokov’s Pale Fire (1962), but with numerous references to fiction in a variety of other languages.”

On Saturday, beginning at 10 a.m., the graduate students presented their papers. The presenters and titles were: Lee Connell, “Beyond the Haunted House: Urban Space as Medium in Sebald’s Austerlitz”; Jennifer Gutman, “The American Hero: Vision, Uncertainty, and Wonder in Kafka’s Amerika”; Selena Hughes, “Medieval and Modern Race in Othello”; Liz Bonhag, “Make This Talk: The Power of Lineage in Wideman’s Philadelphia Fire and the Tempest”; Sarah Hurd, “Collusion and Human Identity in Roberto Bolaño’s By Night in Chile”; Andrew Bruso, “In the Altered Light of the Sundarban’s: Understanding Magical Realism in Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children” and Jeffrey Canino, “Flying Toward Grace: Ambiguous Utopias and the Ambivalence of Escapist Literature in Thomas Pynchon’s Against the Day.”
New Voices, New Visions would like to welcome you to Fresh Perspectives Student Reading on Wednesday, May 4 at 3:30 in SUB 100. Copies of Fresh Perspectives/ESL Exchanges will be available.

MA candidate Kelly Tempest was recently awarded a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. See www.englishblog.newpalz.edu for more details.

Congratulations to Dan Pizappi, Sarah Citrin, and Dean Engle, who copped first place in the Sigma Tau Delta “Literary Trivia Night” competition on April 26. After a hard-fought second round, the team of Jason Weiss, Brian Garritano, and Sam Jalbert took second prize. All winners received $10 gift cards from the Campus Bookstore, courtesy of The Alumni and Friends of the English Department.

“What I’m Reading”: James Sherwood and Thomas Faddegon

With this issue I say goodbye to two terrific Graduate Assistant editors. James and Thomas have done a superb job reporting news and information to the English Department community, not only through the pages of Works Cited, but also in the departmental blog and Facebook page. Thanks for a really terrific collaboration, guys, and all best in your future endeavors!

—Thomas G. Olsen, Chair of English

James Sherwood: Lately, I’ve been reading an eclectic mix—besides class texts (Melville, Whitman, Dickinson et alia), I recently finished Dillard’s Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, which I can’t recommend strongly enough. Before that, Jensen’s Walking on Water. I’m currently rereading Eco’s Foucault’s Pendulum, which I read when I was much younger (and loved it then), and I’m enjoying it immensely. It’s the same subject matter as many of Dan Brown’s books, but so, so much richer. I also have been on a McCarthy kick—I read Blood Meridian a few months ago, then The Road, and I just finished No Country for Old Men. He’s wonderful—his prose changes fluidly from book to book, but it’s always compelling. The next items on my list are Foucault’s Discipline and Punish (recently acquired on a whim) and some Franzen—perhaps The Corrections . . . Unless something else catches my eye! Oh look, a shiny thing!

Thomas Faddegon: I’m currently using the spare time I have with Camus’ The Stranger. The first lines are among the most chilling in literature, and tell us everything we need to know about the state of mind of our detached protagonist, Mersault: “Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don’t know.” It is a haunting yet redemptive tale replete with the emotional alienation that stems as a natural consequence from Camus’ conception of the absurd. As in The Myth of Sisyphus, Camus questions the very notion of meaning, and whether it is a valid means of interpreting the world and the human condition, or a purely artificial conception imposed by our fragile minds to protect us from an empty void of glaring insignificance.

Footnotes

1. May 10: Last day of classes for Spring 2011
2. May 12: Common Exam Day
3. May 13-19: Final exams
4. May 20: Graduate Commencement Ceremony, 6 to 7:30 p.m.
5. May 22: Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Works Cited is published approximately four times per semester by the English Department SUNY New Paltz JFT 714 600 Hawk Drive New Paltz, NY 12561 Associate Editors: Thomas Faddegon and James Sherwood Web: www.newpaltz.edu/english/workscited Check us out on Facebook!

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