



Perhaps I write for no one. Perhaps for the same person children are writing for when they scrawl their names in the snow.

— Margaret Atwood (1939 –)

FAREWELL TO GRADUATING T.A.s

This December, six Teaching Assistants are graduating from the English Department: Jeese Cersosimo, Jennifer Gutman, Michelle Kramisen, Chris Lawrence, Heather Ozgercin, and Michael Rengane-schi.

Composition Coordinator Matt Newcomb says “working with the TAs is one of the best parts of my job. It’s definitely fun, both to get to know them, and to see how they change in their approaches to teaching over their time here.”

Jen Gutman has been a TA for five semesters and she says it’s been one of the best experiences of her life. She remembers being a senior in college with plans to attend NYU to earn her Master’s Degree, when she ran into Chair of English Tom Olsen. He suggested she look into the TA program, and that day “changed her course for the best.”

As a TA, Gutman was able to experiment in a teaching environment, and she found that there’s “something about having to stand in front of a class. It builds confidence in general.”

Mostly, though, it’s the tight-knit support system within the program which Gutman says kept her from feeling “isolated in a challenging position.” From

practicum to classes, to studying, to office hours, there was always someone to talk to in the office.

“I love my office,” she says. “I’m going to miss it.”

Jesse Cersosimo, another graduating TA, will be applying for PhD programs next fall with an interest in “how post-structural thought bears on relationship narratives.” Until then, he wants to continue focusing on teaching.

Cersosimo says he leaves the TA program with a heavy heart.

“I’ve worked in prolific private-sector careers, as well as having run my own businesses, and I can say with certainty that teaching has been the most challenging and rewarding experience in my life to date. I will deeply miss the stimulating and supportive environment of working so closely each day with my wonderfully intelligent peers in the program. I wish each of them all good things.”

Newcomb works closely with the TAs during Tuesday practicum meetings where they address educational issues. He says the graduating TAs in particular are “a group that’s able to be very sincere and serious, yet lighthearted, about their teaching work.”



Faculty Profile: John Langan

Professor John Langan has a busy home life with his wife and their active eight year-old son, but he's somehow made time to teach a full course load and publish two novels, *House of Windows* in 2009, and *The Fisherman* which comes out this year. Both novels are ghost stories and Langan says he tends to write in that end of the literary spectrum.

"Short hand, it's easier to say I write that Stephen King kind of stuff, but if I want to be fancy I'll say it's literary gothic," he jokes. "That just sounds a little pretentious and full of itself, so I try not to drop that too much unless I'm at a cocktail party or something."

Langan remembers a class he took with Professor Jan Schmidt when he was a TA in 1995, *Theories of Writing*, which he says still influences the way he teaches writing. Now, an adjunct professor with a focus on creative writing, he says that it benefits him to think more about the theory of teaching and, as he learned from Schmidt, helping students to find their own voices.

Langan teaches a *Ghost Story* class and *Fiction into Film: Stephen King Goes to the Movies* over the summer and he takes their good enrollments as indication that there is student interest in the genre.

"It's not just me sort of riding my hobby horse out in the middle of nowhere," he says. However, Langan's interest in literary gothic, as he calls it, makes him more sensitive to what his students like to write rather than imposing his

judgment on their work. He adds "It would be wrong for me to say 'no, you're going to write a ghost story, Mister, and you're going to like it!'"

Growing up, Peter Straub, author of *Shadowland* and *Ghost Story*, was a contemporary hero of Langan's, but, as he gets older, his literary appreciation continues to expand. As a student at New Paltz, Langan says that Harry Stoneback introduced him to Faulkner who ended up having a huge impact on him.

"I loved the passionate intensity of his writing," he says, "but I also loved the way that in that great period of his work he keeps reinventing the novel."

Just in the last 15 years or so, Langan also discovered Dickens, whom he hated "with a vigorous passion" as a teenager.

He says, "it had something to do with the fact that I was supposed to read *Great Expectations* for a test and, of course, I waited until two nights before it was due, and I tried to stay up two nights in a row reading it, and then did really terribly on the test. That was Dickens' fault." After giving the book another chance, though, Langan was amazed and blown away by it. He felt the same way about Henry James, and says if he met James when he was in high school, "I would have punched him in the face." Then he read *Jolly Corner* as an undergrad at New Paltz and everything changed.

He translates these experiences into advice for his students: "You're not always ready for the books you're reading, and that's fine. Not every book is for everybody at this particular moment. But don't close the door completely."



2011 *New Voices, New Visions*

The 2011 *New Voices, New Visions* reception was held on November 16 in the Honors Center. Students whose writing was included in the publication proudly read aloud excerpts from their work to their peers, family members, and instructors. *New Voices, New Visions* is a collection of the best essays by Composition Program students. It is used by instructors and students to analyze peer models of writing. Using peer models in place of professional work is "less anxiety inducing," says Joann Deudicibus, Staff Assistant of the Compo-

sition Program, and it teaches students "to talk about writing in a constructive way."

Rachel Rigolino says "I was very impressed with this year's group of writers and hope that they consider English as a major or at least plan to take additional writing courses beyond Composition."

Thanks to our great student writers and editors Joann Deudicibus, Rachel Rigolino, and James Sherwood for putting this great collection together!

Check Out These Helpful Resources on Campus

As the fall semester comes to a close, you may be considering several things. Who can I ask to help me edit this research paper? Can someone tutor me on Shakespeare for my final? Should I be thinking about an internship for next year? How do I spruce up my resume and find a job after graduation? Well, luckily Student Resources and Academic Support (SRAS) and The Career Resource Center (CRC) are right on campus, and their staffs are eager and equipped to help ease all of these concerns.

Student Resources and Academic Support is now located in Old Main B106, and is central to the academic buildings. SRAS, a nationally certified tutoring center through the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), offers academic content area tutoring to any student enrolled at New Paltz. As stipulated by the Student Support Services grant that funds the program, SRAS draws tutors exclusively from the student population. All of the tutoring positions are paid temporary service or research foundation positions starting at minimum wage.

The Tutoring Center is busy daily, but Coordinator of Tutoring Landan Gross expects the number of students who visit to increase now that they are back in Old Main and “closer to the action.” Walk-in service is available in which students can workshop a paper, but these spots fill

up quickly and it is recommended that students call ahead (257-3580) to reserve a time.

The hours of operation are Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday.

“Utilize our support services,” Gross says. “We have really capable and dynamic tutors over here.”

The Career Resource Center offers a number of varied services to students from major-to-career guidance, to resume and cover letter assistance, to mock interviewing. The center is also responsible for weekly events and programs designed to ready students for the workplace. Students are encouraged to make appointments with a Career Resource Center staff member, depending on their field of study or career interests, in order to receive specialized guidance.

“We just get a variety of students with a variety of different things,” King says. “It kind of makes the job interesting; you never know what students want to talk about on a particular day, so it’s never dull.”

The Career Resource Center is located in Humanities 105 and is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with drop-in advising hours Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Call 257-3265 for more information.

Internship Information and Discussion Panel



This November, the Career Resource Center and the Department of English teamed up to hold an Internship Information and Discussion Panel, in which five seasoned interns discussed their experiences working for *NY House* magazine, Marvel Comics, *Time Out New York*, Random House author Susannah Applebaum, and Anton Media Group.

Beth King encourages any student to pursue an internship, even though it is not required for a degree in English. She says “it’s one thing to have a very strong GPA and to demonstrate that you’re good in a classroom setting, but to an employer it’s always important to show that you have common sense in the working world. That shows you’re able to take what you’ve learned in a classroom and apply it in a real world setting. That really gives students an edge.”



Briefly Noted

Cellar Door, a student-run arts & literary magazine, is currently looking for submissions. The club meets every Thursday at 6 p.m. in SUB 414. Submissions may include poetry, short stories, flash fiction, creative nonfiction, experimental fiction, paintings, drawings, illustrations, comics, doodles, photos of sculptures, or prints. E-mail submissions to newpaltzlitmag@gmail.com.



The Friends of Sojourner Truth Library used book sale begins 8:00 a.m. Thursday, December 1. Stop by early to snap up bargain textbooks, pleasure reading, and gifts.

The deadline to complete your online SEIs is December 13. Go to my.newpaltz.edu. Your SEI responses are anonymous and can never be traced to you, but they are important to complete because they provide feedback to instructors and to their supervisors.



On December 1, there will be A Book Party in the Honors Center at 7 p.m. to celebrate Jan Schmidt's and Larry Carr's most recent successes. Schmidt will be reading from her newly released poetry collection, *The Earth Was Still*, and Carr from his *Pancake Hollow Primer*.

"What I'm Reading": Jeremy Simms

Shirley Jackson is perhaps the best forgotten American author of the twentieth-century. With respect to this dubious honor, Jackson, throughout her life, was touted as one of the most important American authors, particularly during the late 1940s, '50s, and early '60s. But posthumously, her work has slipped out of the American literary canon. In recent years, there has been a movement among writers, scholars, and critics to bring Jackson's work back into the limelight; her contemporary advocates recognize her work as instrumental in the American gothic genre, and the twenty-first century critic Darryl Hattenhauer posits that her work constitutes a unique late-modernism, or "proto-postmodernism."

"The Lottery" is Jackson's most famous and arguably most chilling short story. Set in Anytown, USA, the



story takes place on the most harrowing day in the villagers' lives: June 27th, or the day of the lottery. The lottery itself is a raffle that each villager must enter. The "winner" is sacrificed (stoned by the other villagers, including their own family members) in order to superstitiously usher in a fruitful harvest in autumn. As a history buff, I am inclined to believe that Jackson's story was in many ways influenced by the Cold War; although Jackson wrote the story in 1948 before McCarthyism put a stranglehold on American political thought, the elements of paranoia, accusation, and tradition resonate with the revitalization of Red Fear in America post-World War II. But "The Lottery" is certainly not limited to historical criticism, and I would recommend Jackson's work to anyone seeking psychological or more cerebral horror stories.

Footnotes

1. December 9: Last day of classes
2. December 12: Study/Make-up Class Day
3. December 13: Common Exam Day
4. December 14-20: Final examinations
5. December 20: End of Fall 2011 semester
6. December 21: Residence Halls close

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