



# The Literature Program

Texts & Technology

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## Literature and Language Newsletter Spring 2005

Greetings, everyone.

As we move into the concluding weeks of the Spring 2005 semester, we're wondering if we will ever see an actual spring this year. Yes, the crocuses and daffodils have made their appearance in the beds outside K-wing, but the skies have remained what I have now come to think of as a rather stubborn shade of grey. Perhaps the sun will be shining when you receive this newsletter. But if it isn't, you'll just have to make do with some bright and shiny news from the literature program.

The brightest and shiniest news we have is our announcement of two new faculty hires. In a process begun last September and finally concluded on Friday, April 1, the program has hired a new creative writer to replace Stephen Dunn, who is retiring, as well as a second Americanist. Both searches yielded deep and impressive pools of candidates. Literature program faculty reviewed over 130 applications for the creative writing position and over 250 applications for the Americanist position. From those initial pools, we eventually narrowed the field to three creative writers and five Americanists, bringing them to campus for daylong visits. Each candidate, regardless of field, gave a teaching presentation and submitted to additional interviews by program faculty as well as deans and other administrators. The process, as you might imagine, was both labor-intensive and time-consuming but also quite satisfying. While the pools themselves seemingly guaranteed "quality" hires, the program was alert to finding people who would share its commitment to excellent teaching and curricular innovation, who would be good "fits" for us and our students. We believe we have chosen well. Both of our candidates bring not only impressive knowledge of their fields but enthusiasm for their work both inside and outside the classroom. So, without further ado, please let us introduce to

you Nathan Long and Kristin Jacobson, who will be joining the Stockton faculty this fall.

Nathan Long, who holds an MFA in creative writing from Virginia Commonwealth University and has taught for the last five years at Virginia Union University in Richmond, will join the program as Assistant Professor of Creative Writing. While primarily a fiction writer, with work published in several journals (including *Story Quarterly* and *Tin House*), a story collection underway, and a novel in final draft, Professor Long has also published nonfiction and poetry, and has both written and performed several plays and monologues. The recipient of numerous grants and scholarships, including a fellowship from the Mellon Foundation and multiple scholarships to the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, he has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has won other awards for his fiction and poetry. Also interested in multicultural literature, queer studies, and activism, Professor Long has given a number of conference presentations on these topics. He has taught classes and workshops in fiction, nonfiction, poetry and playwriting as well as a variety of courses in American, world, and contemporary literature.

Kristin Jacobson, a 2004 Ph.D. from Penn State, will join the program as an Assistant Professor of American Literature. Professor Jacobson's interdisciplinary dissertation, "Domestic Geographies: Neo-Domestic American Fiction," looks at domestic fiction's continued importance in American literature and culture. Defining "late twentieth and early twenty-first century neodomestic" fiction against its nineteenth-century domestic precursor, Jacobson considers the ways in which both male and female American writers map the space of the home, revealing the ways in which gender, class and race figure in both its original and re-design. Professor Jacobson's specialties include twentieth-century American literature, women's literature, feminist theory, and nineteenth-century American literature. She has begun to publish in her field with an article on the American adrenaline narrative in *Genre* and an article on the neo-domestic American novel forthcoming in *Tulsa Studies in American Literature*. Professor Jacobson has taught a variety of American literature and women's studies courses at Penn State and has received numerous university awards for her teaching and research.

So that's our big news. What else has been going on? What's going to happen? Just scroll down.

First, we'd like to congratulate our most recent alumni, many of whom participated in the Fall 2004 commencement, held this year for the first time just after the semester ended in December, rather than in late January. The literature program was well represented among the distinguished graduates, with five literature majors receiving college

honors. Graduating cum laude (with honors) were Heather Fenton, Evangeline Gumbs, and Micah Robbins. Graduating summa cum laude (with highest honors) were Laura Birchler and Alicia Guarracino.

We were fortunate this year to have been able to host a variety of writers at the college.

With a grant provided by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, Scott Rettberg mounted an *Electronic Writers Series*, showcasing artists and writers currently working in and shaping the field of New Media, including William Gillespie, Talan Memmott, Nick Montfort, Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Ingrid Ankersen, Megan Sapnar, and Mary Flanagan.

The *Visiting Writers Series* for the year concluded two weeks ago with a reading by New Jersey poet Barry Seiler, who read from his two most recent collections, *Black Leaf* and *Frozen Falls*. Stockton hosted three other writers this year as well. We kicked off the series with a very well-attended October reading by Jeffrey Eugenides, whose novel *Middlesex* (from which he read) won the Pulitzer as well as a variety of other literary prizes in 2002. Poet Sharon Olds, choosing from work in her recently published *Selected Poems*, read at our November Ravenswood fundraiser, another well attended affair at which we raised just over \$2000.00. We had another fine and enthusiastic crowd for poet BJ Ward, who also taught creative writing for us this year, and gave a spirited reading in late February. (As a side note, an article on Ward's popular Baseball and Literature class appeared in the *Press of Atlantic City* in February as well.)

Planning for next year's *Visiting Writers Series* is now underway and our slate of writers should be set by the time the fall newsletter arrives, so watch this space and mark your calendars accordingly. And also know that though our official fundraiser is in November, contributions at any time are welcome. Simply contact Lisa Honaker at [Lisa.Honaker@stockton.edu](mailto:Lisa.Honaker@stockton.edu) for more information or write a check to the Richard Stockton College Foundation--Visiting Writers Series and mail it to College Foundation, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, PO Box 195, Pomona, NJ, 08240.

Stockton's Eta Rho chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the Literature Honor Society, completed its third year of operation under two different presidents. President Wendy Fine ran the organization during the fall semester. Graduating in December, Fine was succeeded by Jenniebeth Willett, who was just reelected president for 2005-2006. Having enlisted nearly seventy members since being revived in the spring of 2002, the chapter has spun off a sister organization, Lit Club, in order to receive funds as a campus organization from the Student Senate. The chapter did have a small budget as a result of bake sales and membership dues

and used some of those proceeds on events for its members--mid-semester and holiday parties, complete with pizza, games, prizes, and readings of original poetry.

This semester the Division of Arts and Humanities also welcomed a new interim dean to replace Ken Dollarhide, who left Stockton for a similar position at Kean College in the wilds of North Jersey. After a brief internal search, Robert Gregg, Associate Professor of History, took over the deanship in March. He will serve in this position for eighteen months, with the search for a permanent replacement beginning in the fall.

### **Upcoming Events**

New Media will also be well represented at Stockton's annual Day of Scholarship on Thursday, April 8. Stockton new media students Josh Kelly, Tricia Greto, Dan Ackerman, Lauren Millard, Leia Park, Bob Geise and Michael Rivero will read their original hypertext fiction. The reading will be held from 2:35-3:35 in WQ123. All are welcome to attend.

It does feel as though the fall semester just ended and the spring semester just got underway, but truth to tell the program's annual end-of-the year bash is fast approaching. Traditionally a well-attended and lively affair, the bash will feature the usual feast catered by program faculty, sparkling conversation, appropriately chosen music, readings by creative writers, and numerous awards, with cash prizes provided by generous alumni patrons of the literary arts. We look forward to seeing current and past majors at the bash. We offer a standing invitation to all alumni. Please join us on Friday, April 15 at 4:30 pm in Townsend Residential Life Center Multipurpose Room.

*Stockpot*, Stockton's literary magazine featuring poetry, art and fiction by its students, is nearly ready to go, with students Jim Patterson and Sharon Bybee assuming editorial duties this year. Scott Rettberg has informed us that the *Stockpot* release party and reading will be held on April 21st at 8PM, room TBA. This year Stockton is pleased to welcome the innovative author Shelley Jackson to campus. Jackson is the author of *Patchwork Girl*, a feminist hypertext retelling of the Frankenstein story, *The Melancholy of Anatomy* (Anchor 2002), a book of short stories in which the humors become characters, and "Skin" a notorious short story tattooed on the skin of 2,000 participants who volunteered to become "words." Jackson will be reading from her new novel about Siamese twins.

### **Faculty Doings**

Lydia Fecteau, a program associate, has recently taught two new courses, *Science Fiction and Literature* and *Disability and Literature*, both of which have proven to be hits with more than one audience. She reports that students have seemed to enjoy the Science Fiction class, where they are not just looking at Science Fiction, but literary analysis like Marxist, Feminist, and Queer Theory. Most students hadn't heard of Queer Theory and really enjoyed exploring its potential. The *Disability and Literature* course gained recognition at Temple through its blog and elsewhere. She has discussed the syllabus with the Disability Studies group at MLA. Stockton's course is one of the few undergraduate Disability Studies courses. She was also approached by a disability group in Virginia to discuss the course during Disability Awareness Week. She is proud to report that Stockton is becoming known in the Disability Studies community. Lydia was also recently honored by the Stockton Federation of Teachers as a Distinguished Adjunct Faculty Member.

Deborah Gussman took over the role of Literature Program coordinator for the first time this year and is busy learning the ropes. She is enjoying teaching the Senior Seminar on "Literary Influence and Intertextuality" and expects to see some fascinating final papers. She is an executive committee member of the Catherine Maria Sedgwick Society and is working with this group to organize a symposium on "Antebellum American Women Writers and the City" to be held in New York City in September. Her review of a book about another nineteenth-century woman writer, *Lillie Devereux Blake: Retracing a Life Erased by Grace Farrell*, appeared in *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*. Her article, "'O Savage Where Art Thou?': Rhetorics of Reform in William Apess's Eulogy for King Philip," was published recently in *The New England Quarterly*.

Lisa Honaker took over coordinating the *Visiting Writers Series* and creative writing awards from Stephen Dunn this year. She also signed on to direct the Odyssey Project, a collaborative venture with the *New York Times* and three New Jersey high schools. All has gone pretty well so far with these new responsibilities, and Lisa looks forward to putting what she learned this year to work next year. She will be giving a presentation on the Odyssey Project at the American Democracy Project convention in Portland, Oregon in June. She is following up an article on Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, published in the *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory*, last September with an article on his *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which she hopes to have ready for journal submission this September. She is also at work on an article on Canadian writer Susan Swan for a volume on twentieth-century Canadian humorists, due to be published in 2006.

It's planting season at the Kinsella potato patch. This year Tom is once

again planting "All Blue" potatoes. Last year their skin and flesh were purple rather than blue, but maybe that's just a South Jersey thing. He is also planting "Desiree," a potato "prized by gourmet chefs throughout Europe" (according to [www.seedsofchange.com](http://www.seedsofchange.com)). It's been a long fall and winter waiting for this glorious season of rebirth and rejuvenation. To calm his nerves as he waited, Tom wrote "The Pride of Literature: Arthur Murphy's Essay on Johnson," forthcoming in *The Age of Johnson*. He also reviewed Stuart Bennett's important work, *Trade Bookbinding in the British Isles: 1660-1800*. With the help of Willman Spawn he wrote a piece called "Learning from Binders: Investigating the Bookbinding Trade in Colonial Philadelphia" for a forthcoming collection of essays to be published by Pickering & Chatto entitled *Teaching Bibliography, Textual Criticism, and Book History*. In February he gave a guest lecture, "Cuchulainn Lives," for the Irish-American Cultural Society of South Jersey, and in April he delivers a conference paper at the College English Association meeting: "Scribblers & Printers: The Manuscript and Book Culture of Early Quaker Philadelphia." Soon after the conference it ought to warm enough to transplant his tomato seedlings into the potato patch. Tom is hoping for a great growing season.

The sticker novel Scott Rettberg wrote with Nick Montfort, *Implementation*, was exhibited at the Slought Foundation in Philadelphia, and was the subject of [a colloquium](#) with Johanna Drucker, Christian Bok, and Jean-Michel Rabate in December 2004. The work was also recently featured in the *&Now* issue of the *Notre Dame Review*. *Implementation* is now being translated into Italian by Riccardo Boglione. Scott also remains active on the board of directors of the Electronic Literature Organization, and spent part of his spring break at the University of Iowa at a board meeting to plan the restructuring of the organization, which now has operating nodes at UCLA, the University of Iowa, and the University of Illinois-Chicago. Scott recently gave a guest lecture at Coe College, his undergraduate alma mater, and will be giving a lecture on the history of internet writing at Brown University in April.

Ken Tompkins reports that he has no new technologies to describe -- he knows there are members of the Program who are excited about that fact -- or new projects to suggest currently. He is plugging away. He is reading two books on Monsters and Monstrosities (a hot topic in Medieval Studies these days) and has been playing with ideas for a course as a result. He has a new motorcycle and his moustache did take on the colors of Ireland recently. Please see photo below.

Louise Wigglesworth, a program associate, is currently teaching *Writing for Stage and Screen* for the third time at Stockton and reports that students in the class are exploring the processes, differing styles and

formats for writing scripts for the stage and for film. After creating an extended one-act play of forty-five to sixty minutes in length, or writing a film script of similar length, students are casting actors from the class to read the work aloud for feedback. There's been an exciting diversity of subject matter and styles emerging from these classes. Louise is looking forward to meeting other literature students at this year's bash.

### **In Closing**

We'd like to wish Stephen Dunn a happy and fruitful retirement and to heartily thank BJ Ward for the super job he has done filling in for Stephen this year. We know that BJ's fans are legion. His students have made clear their respect for and gratitude to him. We join them in both sentiments. Thanks, BJ.

We're all looking forward to the end of the semester and, as I indicated at the outset but can't repeat too often, the advent of spring. Even if you no longer measure your existence by school years, we hope the spring and summer still offer you tantalizing possibilities for fun and relaxation. The sunlight alone should be worth a toast. So, cheers to you all in advance.



Please let us know what you're up to. We do so love hearing from you.

All the best,

Lisa Honaker for

### **The Literature Program**

Deborah Gussman -- gussmand@loki.stockton.edu

Lisa Honaker -- honakerl@loki.stockton.edu

Tom Kinsella -- kinsellt@loki.stockton.edu

Scott Rettberg -- Scott.Rettberg@stockton.edu

Ken Tompkins -- ken@loki.stockton.edu

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