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A Note from the Chair

Claire Sponsler

Surely one of the best parts of a chair's job is getting the chance to boast about the department's accomplishments. And that's what I'd like to use this space to do.

The first, and biggest, accomplishment of the last year, if measured by the amount of time and energy that went into it, was the matriculation of 251 students who earned B.A. degrees with first or second majors in English in 2009, along with 14 who received M.F.A.s and 10 who reached the lofty heights of a Ph.D. I'd like to take this opportunity to applaud their achievement and congratulate them on their success in completing their degrees. Their accomplishments were aided by the generosity of the donors whose contributions help fund scholarships and awards for undergraduate and graduate students, and we are deeply grateful for that support.

Even as those graduating students set off on new adventures, the hallways and classrooms of EPB have filled with new and returning scholars. This fall, over 4,000 undergraduates are enrolled in English classes, studying such exciting topics as *The Literature of Displacement and Exile*, *American Gothic*, *Elementary Old English*, and

A Note from the Chair continues on page 2



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

Joanne Janssen

English Department graduate Joanne Janssen (PhD 2010) has landed one of the more unusual jobs amongst our recent grads, as an Assistant Professor at the Asian University for Women in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Founded in 2006, the school enrolls 412 women from twelve Asian countries, many of whom are from rural, poor, or otherwise disadvantaged populations. (An interview with the founder was featured recently in *Newsweek* at <http://education.newsweek.com/2010/09/13/educating-asia-one-poor-woman-at-a-time.html>.)

We caught up with Joanne by email, and she kindly agreed to answer our questions about this unique teaching opportunity.

How did you find out about this job?

I found out about this job last April. My husband, Arlyn, was a stay-at-home dad last year in order to help me finish the dissertation at a reasonable pace. He enjoys researching, so he helped me while I was on the job market by sifting through the various job listings and notifying me of available positions in my field. When a spouse is involved in the job application process, it has certain consequences, I've found. In this case, I'm not sure I would have even applied for the job: we have a toddler, we are close to our families and friends, and moving halfway around the world

Joanne Janssen continues on page 2

A Note from the Chair continued from page 1

Renaissance Texts and Technology. Sixty students are currently enrolled in the Creative Writing Track and fifty-three are taking Honors courses. Another twenty-five undergraduates have signed up for a newly introduced course, Literary Readings Attendance (008:004), designed to introduce them to the wealth of literary and scholarly readings and talks to be found in the “City of Literature,” as Iowa City has recently been designated. At the graduate level, we welcomed ten new M.F.A. students to the Nonfiction Writing Program and fourteen new Ph.D. students to the program in literature. These students bring our graduate enrollments to 47 M.F.A., 4 M.A., and 105 Ph.D. students.

It will come as no surprise, I’m sure, that teaching and mentoring all of those students occupies much of the faculty’s time. The English Advising Office advised over 1400 undergraduate students last year, and faculty spent countless hours meeting students during their office hours, grading tests and papers with an eye to helping students improve their thinking and writing skills, and lecturing and leading discussions during classes.

Given that attentiveness to student success, the energetic level of the faculty engagement in research—as well as in service to the university, profession, and beyond—is especially impressive. In 2009, English Department faculty published books, scholarly articles, essays, stories, and poems, along with book reviews and encyclopedia entries. They also gave numerous papers and readings, organized conferences and chaired conference sessions, served as journal or book review editors or on editorial boards, and in numerous other ways were vital contributors to the life of the humanities. The high quality of their creative and scholarly endeavors can be seen in the awards and honors they won, including the profession’s most prestigious ones: Fulbright Fellowships, NEH awards, and Mellons.

Had I world enough and time, I could go on. But let me instead end by thanking our remarkable faculty and students, as well as the dedicated and hard-working staff who support them, along with our many alumni and departmental friends, whose generous financial contributions and thoughtful notes and email messages are always most gratefully received.

Joanne Janssen continued from page 1

just wasn’t part of my vision for my future. Arlyn thought the job was a great fit for me, however, and since he’s more of an adventure seeker than I am, it appealed to him, too. He convinced me to apply.

Did you visit Bangladesh at all before moving there?

Not only had I not visited Bangladesh before taking this job, but I had never been to Asia! It was certainly a leap. Both my husband and I had spent some time in developing countries, however, which gave us a sense of what to expect and how we might react to what we would encounter here. In my case, I had worked for a month in an orphanage in Mexico, so I had witnessed poverty and injustice, and I also had experienced how fulfilling it could be to contribute to such a community in even a small way.

What skills do you bring with you from UI that have proven to be helpful in your new position there?

Because my position emphasizes teaching, all of the training and experiences that I received in teaching at the University of Iowa have been immensely helpful here. And, since I am one of only two literature faculty, I need to be a generalist. The fact that I have taught texts from a variety of genres, time periods, and geographical locations in Interpretation of Literature has prepared me well for the variety of texts and courses I am teaching here. (For example, right now I am teaching a World Lit course, which would have completely intimidated me without having taught some international texts in Interpretation of Lit.) Even the freedom that the UI grants TAs to develop their own courses and to work collaboratively have helped me at this start-up university, where we are developing new curriculum and doing quite a bit of work as a team.

How would you describe your students at AUW?

The students are a complete pleasure: they are diligent, motivated, and bright. I couldn’t believe it when I gave my first assignment, and every single student turned in a paper on time that met the page requirements. My students don’t take their education for granted, which is refreshing and which aids the learning process. At the same time, I am learning so much from them as they bring their diverse backgrounds to bear upon the texts we read together. Last week I finished teaching *Medea*. It was so interesting to read that text with young women who are from cultures in which it is not uncommon for men to take second wives; their perspective on the injustices that Medea had suffered as well as on her response to those injustices were really insightful. They saw the play as remarkably relevant to their lives. I’m also teaching a course on censorship and banned books, in which my students are sharing stories about ways they or people close to them have fought against restrictions they have faced as young women or ways in which they have courageously attempted to speak out against inequities. I feel humbled by their experiences—and honored to play a role in their continued empowerment through education.

To read more about Joanne’s experience securing an international teaching job, see her recent column in *Inside Higher Ed* at <http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2010/11/17/janssen>.

To see photos of Joanne and her students at AUW, see the English Department Facebook page at www.facebook.edu/IowaEnglish.

“When a spouse is involved in the job application process, it has certain consequences.”

JOANNE JANSSEN

Thank you for supporting the English Department

Over the past several years, the University of Iowa, like many other institutions across the country, has faced historic budget difficulties. In light of this, the English Department continues to rely gratefully on the generosity of our supporters to help maintain our level of distinction. Your gifts have allowed us to continue with a range of important initiatives, including visits by eminent scholars and writers; assistance with conference hosting; undergraduate and graduate student scholarships and funding; and faculty travel to professional conferences. We thank you for playing this important role in the department.

If you wish to make a donation to the department, you can use the form on the back of this newsletter or you can donate online via the University of Iowa Foundation's secure site, www.uifoundation.org. (Click on the "GIVE ONLINE NOW" button, then "A-Z List of all areas," select "E," and find the "English, Department of" listing.)

For more on the University of Iowa's budget situation, see <http://budget.uiowa.edu/>.



DONOR PROFILE:

David Hamilton and Rebecca Clouse



David Hamilton came to Iowa from Michigan in 1975 to teach in the developing nonfiction program and in medieval literature. Soon thereafter, he found himself editor of *The Iowa Review*, a post he held for thirty years. In 1992, in returning from a Fulbright year in Spain, he met Rebecca Clouse. Rebecca had come from Yale, where she had earned a Masters in Divinity, to join the English PhD program.

Over the years, David and Rebecca have seen the department go through numerous changes, not the least of which has been ongoing reductions in funding for humanities. When David developed the first *Out of Iowa* newsletter in late 1980s, he felt compelled to give to the department, an act that has become his and Rebecca's habit over the years. "The university is my professional, and to a significant extent, our cultural home," David says. "It seems right to tend it a little by supporting what we most admire, and we can afford to be generous in a few small ways."

When he's not teaching, writing, or otherwise engaged in his departmental life, David can be found gardening in the glen behind their house. This November, he planted two young hemlocks, adding to the extensive list of wildflowers and trees he has nurtured. And Rebecca, who occasionally teaches in the department as well, has grown very involved in making art; she has two solo shows scheduled in the next couple of years. As David closes in on retirement, the two of them look forward to many more meals on the porch overlooking their glen, watching the birds and the trees change colors through the seasons.

The English Department is grateful to David and Rebecca for their continued generosity, and grateful beyond that to have them as part of our community over the years.



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STUDENT PROFILES



KIMBERLY ZEUTENHORST

Kimberly Zeutenhorst remembers constantly reading and writing as a child in Orange City, Iowa, but when she came to the University of Iowa, she began by registering for classes as a pre-med student. After listening to her classmates' mastery of advanced physics and math, however, she quickly realized she belonged not with them but with the English majors—and four years later, her academic record and personal happiness have proved that true.

In Fall 2009, Kimberly made it through her most challenging semester ever, attending school full time while being pregnant and going through the process of open adoption. She finished the semester with a great sense of accomplishment—not to mention excellent grades—and the following semester studied abroad in France. While there she learned by email that she had been awarded the Sherry Simmons Loring Memorial Scholarship and the Darwin Turner award. “I started to tear up in the computer lab at l’Universite de Pau,” she shares, “because the money I received would go directly towards various educational expenses that I didn’t know how I would account for (having taken out loans to study abroad).”

After spending the summer learning Arabic in Morocco, Kimberly is working on her honors thesis this year. “Working with my love for the American gothic literary movement and delving into the reception of the Arabian Nights/Thousand and One Nights in America during the 18th/19th centuries has already proved rewarding,” she reports. She will graduate in the spring with a degree in English and a second in French and Arabic, and is applying to graduate school for Fall 2011.

ADAM SEGAL

Adam Segal hails from Fox Point, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee. In high school, he mentioned his interest in writing to his adviser, who suggested he apply to the University of Iowa—which is how he ended up in a state few people in his hometown know much about. After a brief foray into journalism, Adam decided to head over to the English Department, where he has since joined the Creative Writing Track. He credits his mom with spurring his love of literature: “My mom’s always been pushing me to read; she insists it makes a person smarter. So I grew up thinking books were inherently Good.”

Last year, Adam was on the committee of students who created the English Society, establishing it as an officially-recognized student group (see page 6). In spring 2010, after spending time tutoring adult students preparing for the GED, Adam won the Holsteen Memorial Scholarship, which is designated for students with high academic achievement, talent in the field of literature, and good citizenship. It’s an honor he is grateful for, especially as an out-of-state student with mounting debt.

Of the department, Adam reports, “The English Department has an incredibly diverse load of classes, with professors that love both their research and their teaching jobs. I have never taken an English class and been disappointed.” In addition to his work in literature and writing, Adam is minoring in French and also possibly Religion. He hopes to teach English in France after graduation, and plans to return to school in the next few years in order to become a high school English teacher.

“I grew up thinking books were inherently Good.”

ADAM SEGAL, EXPLAINING HIS LOVE OF LITERATURE



JOSÉ ORDUÑA

Originally from Veracruz, Mexico, José Orduña moved with his family to Chicago just before his second birthday. He first ventured into writing in the third grade, when he started documenting the differences between his own background and those of the middle-class kids at his parochial school. He went on to receive a BA in Film & Video from Columbia College Chicago, where he took courses in creative nonfiction and continued to explore the power of the essay. A first-generation college graduate, he made it his goal to attend Iowa's Nonfiction Writing Program.

"Now that I am here," says José, who came to the NWP as a Dean's Fellow, "my expectations of the program and of Iowa City, a UNESCO City of Literature, have been exceeded. I feel surrounded by inspiration, in and out of the classroom, and know that in an environment so saturated with ideas my work can only grow.

"I'm very excited to work in the essay at a time when people like John D'Agata and David Shields are challenging ideas of form, structure, genre, veracity, and authorship. I think it is really important to have this conversation as a young writer, to challenge my ideas of what writing is and can be. I've enrolled in a Radio Drama class with Jeff Porter this semester and am enthralled with exploring sound and what it takes to construct an essay that successfully leaves the page."

Besides reading and writing, José also loves cooking, and was delighted to find the Iowa City Farmers' Market open twice weekly less than a mile from his apartment.

JENNIFER LOMAN

Having lived all her life in California, Jennifer Loman worked a variety of jobs—Special Education aide, production editor, freelance educational writer, and high school English teacher among them—and got an M.A. in English at Cal State Chico before moving to Iowa last fall to join the English Ph.D. program. She picked the University of Iowa for both the strength and the flexibility of the program; as the mother of three, she was glad to find a wide range of courses being offered during the day. As she reports, "I realized that I could pursue my goal of a Ph.D. without compromising being a mom to my three children."

Now that she's here, Jennifer is finding many opportunities for inspiration, focusing on American literature with an emphasis on place studies. "I study literature because of its limitless possibilities," she shares. "In the past few years, my study of literature has taken me to the fall of Rome, the halls of medieval England, and the Great Wall of China.... I am interested in not only literary representations of natural landscapes, but depictions of our built environments as well. I am fascinated by how Americans shape space and how space shapes them." A lover of people, she is also teaching while in the program, currently as a Rhetoric TA.

In addition to her doctoral degree, Jennifer is working on a Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate in the Rhetorics of Inquiry. Outside of studying and teaching, she enjoys swimming and cheering on her wrestling sons. "I love living in a City of Literature; they love the proximity to UI Hawkeye Wrestling!"

CONFERENCES

Each year, the department sponsors or co-sponsors conferences related to the study of literature and writing. We are pleased to contribute to the ongoing scholarly and creative achievement represented by these gatherings.

Bedell NonfictionNow Conference

This November, over 400 teachers and writers of nonfiction gathered on the University of Iowa campus for the third Bedell NonfictionNow Conference. Keynote speakers were Alison Bechdel, Rebecca Solnit, and John Edgar Wideman.

British Women Writers Conference

In April 2009, English graduate students organized the 17th Annual British Women Writers Conference, with keynote addresses by Lynda Joy Sperling of Denison University and Alison Booth of the University of Virginia.

Craft, Critique, and Culture Conference

Graduate students in English participate yearly in the planning of Craft, Critique, and Culture, an interdisciplinary conference focusing on the intersections of critical and creative approaches to writing. The 11th annual conference will be held in April 2011.

Medieval Association of the Midwest 2010 Conference

The Medieval Association of the Midwest held its annual conference at the UI this September, with keynote speeches by Carolyn Dinshaw and John D. Niles.

New Faculty



BLAINE GRETEMAN



ADAM HOOKS

BLAINE GRETEMAN joined the English Department in 2009. After finishing his MA at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, he worked as a journalist for *TIME* magazine in London. He later worked in politics as a consultant and policy director of a US Senate campaign before finishing his PhD at Berkeley. His research and teaching examine the 17th century as an era of poetic, political, and scientific upheaval. His current book project, *Problem Children: Youth and Authority in Early Modern England*, explores one of the period's most striking innovations—the emergence of arguments for consent as the basis of obligation.

ADAM HOOKS joined the English Department in 2009, after finishing his PhD at Columbia. His work focuses on the developing literary industries of early modern England, with an emphasis on the relationship between drama and the marketplace of print. His current book project, “Vendible Shakespeare,” tells the story of Shakespeare’s career in print from the late-16th to the late-17th century. Other works in progress study the forms and practices of textual circulation in the early modern period, particularly commonplacing in manuscript and in print.



New Undergraduate English Society forms

This past spring, following months of planning meetings, a group of dedicated English majors formed the University of Iowa English Society. The Society, now an official student organization, aims to help foster a sense of community for all students in the department.

The Society is divided into committees, focused respectively on writing, academics, service, and social activities.

A student-run writing workshop is already quite active, meeting each week to share their own writing or discuss the works of published authors. The atmosphere of the workshop is fun and lighthearted but a lot of insight is packed into each meeting.

The academics committee has organized the Pizza with Your Professor series in which students can become better acquainted with their professors in an informal setting. Several such gatherings have already happened successfully, and the committee plans to hold about five per semester.

There are plenty of other activities on the way, and we are very excited about the Society’s future.

—Adam Segal, English Society cofounder and English Department student employee

Retirements

BILL KUPERSMITH, longtime editor of *Philological Quarterly*, retired in 2007, after 35 years of service to the department. His scholarly interests were in 18th-century English satire and satirists, the influence of Classical Greek and Latin literature on English writers, and the Bible and English literature. His published work includes a book on 18th-century English versions of Roman satire.

FRED WOODARD, a member of the English and African American Studies faculty since 1973, retired in 2009. He taught courses in African American literature and culture, and, drawing on his background in video production and visual arts, he also taught Multimedia Writing. He served as director of the International Writing Program in 1988.

RUEDI KUENZLI retired in 2010 after joining the department in 1971. He taught courses on contemporary theories, interarts, avant-garde, and literatures and cultures of the 19th and 20th centuries; he also taught in the Department of Cinema and Comparative Literature. He has published books on Marcel Duchamp, Dada and Surrealist Film, Andre Breton, Surrealism and Women, and New York Dada.

JOHN RAEBURN joined the English and American Studies Departments in 1976, and retired in 2010. His scholarly interests included American film and photography, and American 20th-century cultural history. He taught courses on American literature, art, and history. His publications include a book on Ben Shahn’s photographs and a cultural history of photography in 1930s America.

Two longtime English Department staff members have retired in recent years: **VICKY DINGMAN**, in 2006, after 25 years at the University of Iowa, and **SHARRY LENHART**, in 2009, after 34 years at the UI.

Alumni News

PETER BLAIR (PhD '89) is a Lecturer in English at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He has just published his third book of poetry, *Farang*, based on his three years in Thailand in the Peace Corps.

TOM BYERS (PhD '79) is in his 30th year of teaching at the University of Louisville, where he is Professor of English and Director of the Commonwealth Center for the Humanities and Society. In Spring 2010, he taught at the University of Paris IV (Sorbonne).

MIKE CHASAR (PhD '07) is an Assistant Professor of English at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon.

JENNIFER S. CHENG (MFA '09) is a 2010–2011 recipient of a Fulbright fellowship to Hong Kong. Her chapbook *Invocation: an Essay* was a finalist for the 2010 New Michigan Press / Diagram Chapbook Contest and will be published by NMP in December 2010.

SUCHETA MALLICK CHOUDHURI (PhD '09) is an assistant professor at the University of Houston-Downtown in Houston, TX.

MATTHEW DAVIS's (MFA '07) book *When Things Get Dark: A Mongolian Winter's Tale*, based on his MFA thesis, was released with St. Martin's Press this year.

RYAN DENNIS (BA '07) spent the summer of 2010 riding his bike across the US with a friend. They blogged about it at <http://cycleacrossusa.blogspot.com/>.

RAE KATHERINE EIGHMEY (BA '71) is a writer living in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her new novel, *Abraham Lincoln in New Orleans*, is based on Abraham Lincoln's 1831 flatboat trip down the Mississippi.

ALLISON HUGHES (BA '09) is working as a Marketing and Book Publicist Assistant at the United States Institute of Peace Press in Washington, D.C.

THOMAS MCLEAN (PhD '04) is a Lecturer in English at the University of Otago, New Zealand. His edition, *Further Letters of Joanna Baillie* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP), was published in July 2010.

MIA NUSSBAUM (MFA '06) is this year's Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Writer in Residence at the Seven Hills School in Cincinnati, Ohio.

BONNIE ROUGH (MFA '05) recently published her first book, *Carrier: Untangling the Danger in My DNA*, which was based on her MFA thesis. *Carrier* has garnered much praise, including a starred review from *Publisher's Weekly*.

MARTIN B. SHICHTMAN (PhD '81) is a Professor of English at Eastern Michigan University. His book, *Cinematic Illuminations: The Middle Ages on Film*, co-authored with Laurie A. Finke, was published by The Johns Hopkins University Press in 2010.

JERALD WALKER (BA '93) recently published *Street Shadows: A Memoir of Race, Rebellion, and Redemption* to positive reviews, including in *Publishers Weekly*. He is an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Emerson College.

CONNIE (CORCORAN) WILSON (BA '67) recently published her seventh book, *Ghostly Tales of Route 66: Arkansas to Arizona*.



In Memoriam

Professor Huston Diehl died September 8, 2010, at the age of 61, after having been diagnosed with adenoid cystic carcinoma in 1998. Huston was a beloved colleague, passionate teacher, and influential scholar of early modern drama. In May 2010, a group of her former and current students and colleagues came together for a symposium in her honor; more information about the symposium can be found at http://english.uiowa.edu/news/2010/05_06.shtml.

Huston's presence in the department will be greatly missed. A full memorial may be viewed at <http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/memorials/diehl.shtml>. Contributions may be made to the Huston Diehl Memorial Fund in care of the University of Iowa Foundation, Levitt Center for University Advancement, 1 West Park Road, Iowa City, IA 52255. This fund, established with an initial bequest from Huston before her death, will help support the teaching and research mission of the English Department at the University of Iowa.

Got news? Let us know at <http://english.uiowa.edu/alumni/> (click on "Submit News") and we'll post it on our website.

View this newsletter online at www.english.uiowa.edu/news/outof Iowa

Would you rather receive this newsletter by email? Drop us a line at english@uiowa.edu.

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