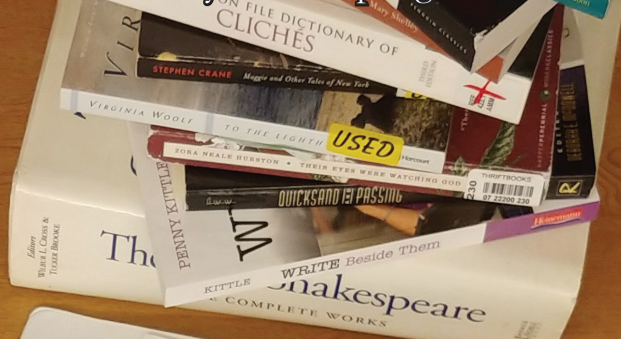
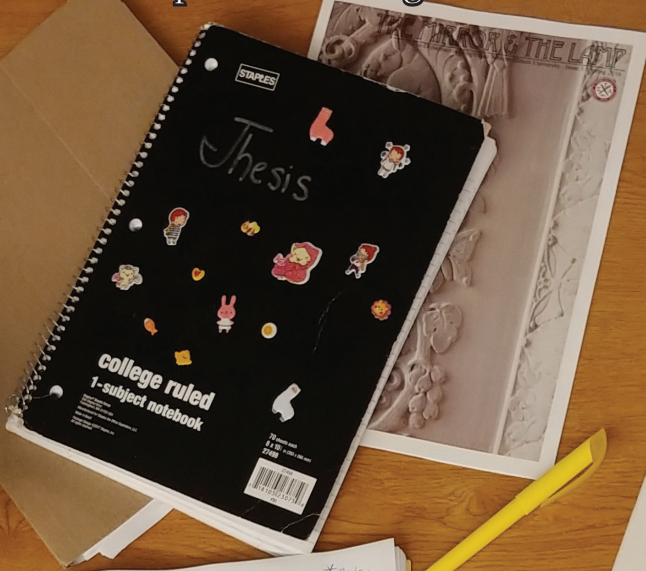




# THE MIRROR & THE LAMP

The Department of English at Western Illinois University Issue 6 Spring 2019



*Essay Outline*

- I Intro: hook, thesis, not hook
- Body 1: The manipulation of time
- Body 2: Why are you sleep?
- Body 3: Outside of it?
- V. Con?

*Handwritten notes:*  
+ note to self: check also outside the lamp  
check also outside the lamp



*Open book page 1:*

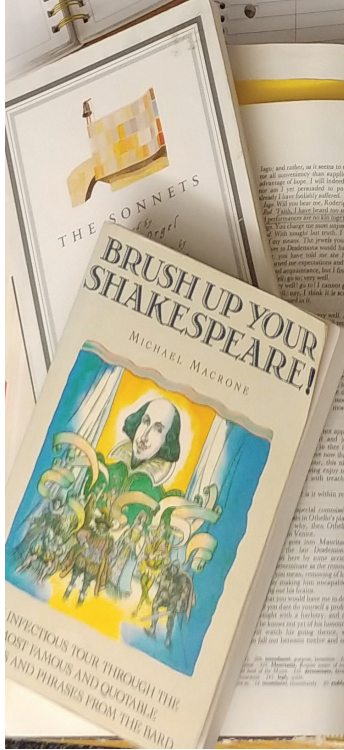
Phonetic spelling of what is worth learning and important to them in their teaching...

*Open book page 2:*

Establishing Clear Learning Objectives... The clarity of purpose provided the...

*Open book page 3:*

Elementary... Secondary... Tertiary...



*Open book page 4:*

...the poor well nightingale to a...  
...the nightingale...  
...the nightingale...

*Open book page 5:*

...the nightingale...  
...the nightingale...  
...the nightingale...

*Comparative Shakespeare Essay*

*Othello #the folio did it better*

*quarto is sexier less fourteen DT2*

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

by Dr. David Banash

In English, we are students of the imagination. This is the great strength of reading the traditions of literature. Works of poetry and fiction ask us to imagine the world, and I believe nothing is more powerful than imagining our world.

Unfortunately, imagination is often associated with a kind of childish, escapist pleasure. Think of Gene Wilder as Willy Wonka inviting his guests into the chocolate factory, a “world of pure imagination” that is entirely devoted to infantile, gustatory excesses and traps. Here, imagination is walled off from the world, a secret garden that only the child who holds the golden ticket can enter, something that must be protected from the adult demands of the real world.

The literary imagination could not be more different. Fiction and poetry do not turn away from the real world—they plunge us into it. They offer us ways to literally create images of the world, to see how we can fit its pieces together so that we might understand our experience. The world is so vast, so old, and so complex, our own limited lived experiences never allow us to really imagine it—that is to make images that create coherence out of its seeming chaos. It is only through the vast, collective imaginations of whole cultures that we understand our relative place in the world, how we might make sense of experience, and how our world might well be imagined in new and different ways our personal experience would never suggest to us. It is this collective imagination that literature embodies and transmits to us.

Arguably, the form of the novel reaches its fullest expression in nineteenth-century realism, as grounded and gritty as “realism” sounds, it is paradoxically one of the highest expressions of imagination. In English, we can think of masterpieces like George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* or even Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*. In Russian, Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, or in French, Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, capture an image of a whole world. Through the freedoms of fiction, these works, and many others like them, let us live whole lifetimes in a few hours, let us move from the perspectives and passions of an individual to the inhuman forces of time and history, allowing us to grasp the seeming chaos of the world as a coherence.

The more chaotic and unsettled the world, the more the literary imagination can provide insight, enlightenment, solace, and alternatives. As I do every four years, this summer I will reread Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, a remarkable novel that asks us to think of our individual experience through the masses that make up nations and the forces of history that express themselves in our individual experiences. Though published 1869, I cannot think of a more timely novel for 2019.



As we enter into the summer, I encourage everyone to turn to the literary imagination, to find there not only a different image of the world but also the possibility that we could imagine our world differently—the first step to actually making a different world.

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# DINNER, DEATH, AND DARKNESS: A CELEBRATION OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

by Courtney Bender



Desiree Steele as the murdered wife from "The Black Cat"

Once again, the members of Sigma Tau Delta and the WIU English Department faculty gathered together for Dinner and Conversations, a biannual event where a faculty member hosts a literary-themed dinner party. This time, Dr. Timothy Helwig, our chapter's faculty adviser, decided to focus on an author who is perhaps as infamous as he is famous: Edgar Allan Poe.

The Helwigs' former funeral-home-of-a-house was decked out with references and appropriately dreary décor, from a squawking faux raven, to candles shining with Poe quotes, and cookies shaped and frosted in his likeness. Adding to the visual festivities, attendees dressed up as their favorite Poe characters, such as the murdered wife from "The Black Cat," the Red Death, Annabelle Lee, and Poe himself.

Partway through the party, Dr. Timothy Helwig challenged us with trivia in the form of a quiz. Most of us struggled with the tricky test, but the top three were rewarded with Poe-themed prizes: a copy of the complete works of Poe, a raven finger puppet, and a Poe finger puppet.



Kaylee Gundling as Ligeia from the story of the same name

The night was filled with discussions of the author, from the fact that most or all of his female characters are dead, to his final and unfinished work. But, being the talkative members of the English discourse community that we are, we branched out to a variety of topics, from emotional appeals in commercials, to *Twilight*, to teaching Dr. Banash about the saying "spilling the tea." We laughed, debated, and bonded as a department. There's something special about dressing up, eating good food, and holding literary conversations. This event is one of the benefits and specialties of our honors society. Let's hope even more guests will attend next semester, and let's look forward to our next opportunity to party like English nerds.



Above: Dr. Richard Ness as an allusion to Poe's unfinished final story



Left: Dr. Magdelyn Helwig's Poe-faced cookies



Dr. Magdelyn Helwig as Annabel Lee from the poem of the same name. Dr. Timothy Helwig as the Red Death from "The Masque of the Red Death", and Courtney Bender as "The Masque of the Red Death"

# FROM SIMPKINS HALL TO HEALTHCARE WAITING ROOMS

by Abigail Tichler

WIU Graduate, Class of 2015 — Clear Digital Media's Hearing News Network Product Manager —

In the Spring of 2015, I felt fearless as I walked across the stage to accept my Master's Degree in English from Western Illinois University. I had put six years of hard work into a degree that I was passionate about and confident in. However, about forty-eight hours after the ceremony, the graduation glow had worn off and the cold dread of reality started to set in. I would now

I'd had it in my mind that my English degree would limit me in teaching, writing, publishing, and editing. After all, that is what all of my peers, professors, and classmates had pursued. But I wasn't interested in teaching and I knew that book publishing was sadly a highly competitive and geographically limited field. With a belly full of hot panic, I started to research what else I could do with this degree. After a few Google searches and several dozen hours on job searching sites, I quickly learned how applicable an English degree is in a wide variety of industries.

After a few months of searching, fate struck, and I was offered a job at a medical marketing company in the Chicago area. I am now proud to say that I am Clear Digital Media's Hearing News Network Product Manager. I know it's a bit of a mouthful, but I basically run a TV network that plays exclusively in doctor's office waiting rooms.

Believe it or not, my English degree made me a perfect match for this niche role! My bosses were looking to hire someone with great skills in research and writing, as I would need to research medical conditions, boil them down into digestible pieces, and transform them into easily consumable scripts for waiting patients. Of course, my 6 years of English homework had prepared me for that task. However, my role at Clear Digital Media involved a few more elements. I needed to be able to view a topic through a variety of lenses and perspectives to ensure that no one in our wide demographic would



be confused or offended by any of the videos we created. Hearing News Network broadcasts in waiting rooms across the continent, so ensuring that viewers of all ages, ethnicities, and education levels would enjoy and understand our content in the same way was a challenge that only an English grad could handle.

Beyond researching and script writing, I also manage the entire video design process, from a client request, to research, to overseeing a design, to final approval and implementation.

Without the analytical and organizational skills I picked up as a student, I would not be able to handle hundreds of these projects at one time while maintaining full communication with my team and staying organized.

My role as Hearing News Network Product Manager has given me the opportunity to manage both long-term and short-term projects and work with a team of designers and sales people. It has given me the privilege to travel across the country, to attend industry events and learn from the elite in my field. It may sound sappy, but I am thankful that I followed my passion and pursued my English degree despite not knowing where it would take me. I would not be nearly as confident in every aspect of my role at Clear Digital Media if I didn't have the diverse skill set and background that an English degree has given me.

If I could give any advice to current students or recent grads, it would be to not be afraid to look for jobs outside of the English bubble. English skills are needed in almost every industry and you have a special skill set that will be valued. If your passion is to write, edit, publish, and educate, then all of that is still possible in other fields. And if you are like me, you will discover new passions and opportunities that you didn't know were available.

# THE PHI DELTA CHAPTER OF SIGMA TAU DELTA TAKES ON ST. LOUIS: AN ADVENTURE IN PHOTOGRAPHS



*Images Courtesy of Tim Helvig, Kaylee Gundling and Courtney Bender*

*Conference Attendees: Dr. Tim Helvig, Dr. Magdehyn Helvig, Kaylee Gundling, Desiree Steele, Apryl Moore, Gayla Bean, Emma Dayboff, Courtney Bender. We also got together with WIU alumna Molly Cameron*

# BONNIE SONNEK RETIRES

by Dr. David Banash

*On the occasion of Dr. Bonnie Sonnek's retirement, I was honored to make the following speech at the College of Arts and Sciences Holiday Reception in the Lamoine Room of the University Union on Friday, November 30th, 2018.*

I am honored to recognize Dr. Bonnie Sonnek for her 15 years of service to Western, to the English Department, and most especially for her work in educating an entire generation of high school English teachers. But even more than that, to honor her lifetime of commitment and achievements as a teacher, an intellectual, and a colleague who is devoted to learning and to mentoring others in the art of teaching.



Bonnie and I arrived at Western in 2003, and I have had the pleasure of working with her ever since. When I reflect back on my time with her, what most strikes me is her absolute sense of adventure, her never ending intellectual curiosity, and the deeply caring relationships she has nurtured with both colleagues and students.

Like so many of our students, Bonnie has always had a foot in two worlds. She was raised on a farm in Minnesota, and grew up knowing agriculture and animals intimately. But her sense of adventure and her curiosity would not allow her to remain on the farm. She took her degree in English and Speech from Winona State in 1976 and taught High School in Alexandria, Minnesota. She didn't stay there long though. With her irrepressible sense of adventure, she signed up to go to Iceland to teach American students for the Department of Defense, and then on to yet another a new teaching post in Germany. She spent many years abroad, her free time devoted to exploring the whole of Europe.

Bonnie went from Germany to Texas, where she worked as a grant writer and then an editor. Never content not to be engaged, learning, and challenging herself, she went on to earn her M.A. in Developmental Adult Education at Texas State University, and then decided

that she would earn her Ph.D., which she did, in Language, Literacy, and Culture at the University of Iowa in 2002.

Bonnie has brought this wealth of experience to her students and colleagues. The English department faculty often organizes informal reading groups, and Bonnie was there, willing to take up any book that was on offer, and maintaining an ambitious and varied reading life

of her own! Indeed, downsizing her library has been almost a full-time occupation for her this semester. She is there at almost every department event, at social gatherings, and has done much to build a rich culture in our department. Dr. Alisha White remembers Bonnie's generosity, writing "One semester, I had a tight schedule and often ate lunch alone in my office. I ran into Bonnie one day at the microwave and she asked if I wanted to lunch with her. It was such a nice break, that we made it a thing. Whenever we both have the same break for lunch, we try to eat together. We talk about classes and life and what good books we are reading. It has been lovely to get to know her." Lest this all run the risk of making Bonnie into too much of a saint, I should also point out that she has a wicked sense of humor, and if you have the chance, ask her about her practical jokes, including a whopper involving a friend's fairy garden and two most inappropriate gnomes.

But while Bonnie is an engaged friend and colleague, imaginative intellectual and voracious reader, she always keeps her foot in another world outside the university, and she comes back to us every summer from her time in Montana with stories of riding horses, the wild land, gardening, and more. Indeed, for a time she spent her Macomb summers on a horse herding cattle for local

farmers. She is truly a renaissance woman, living the life of the mind and of nature.

But most of all, Bonnie has spent these last fifteen years doing a supremely important task: educating a new generation of teachers. It is the students that will most miss Bonnie, and before I end my speech today I want to acknowledge this.

Her former student Tiffany Dimmick (B.A. 2011) writes “Bonnie has a deep passion for teaching. Not just teaching about facts, rules, and strategies, but getting to know her students on a personal, one-to-one basis (even if that meant taking the whole period to just talk). I feel like her motto would be: Life over textbook.”

Bonnie’s motto reappears in the testimonies of many of her other students.

Dawn Hindberg (B.A. 2006) writes “When I reflect on my time as a student at Western Illinois University, thoughts of my office chats with Dr. Sonnek come to my mind. Dr. Sonnek truly dedicated her time to her students by opening her office and her



heart for conversations about the classwork, chats about books, and musings about life. I do not think I would have become the educator I am today without her.”

Her student Darlene DeWitz (née Roberts, B.A. 2006) writes, “I would not be the professional I am today if it weren’t for Dr. Sonnek. While I attended Western, I experienced setbacks that made me question whether English Education was the right field for me. She helped me realize my potential, which did wonders for my confidence and how I was eventually able to grow as a teacher. She also sparked my interest in teaching pre-service teachers later in my career. Because of Dr. Sonnek, I am currently working on my PhD in Reading, Language, and Literacy, and after a long day of teaching high school English/Reading, I moonlight as an instructor for my University’s Masters of Ed program, where I get to teach future educators. I owe everything I have accomplished to the support she showed me each and every time I wound up in her office, needing advice and guidance.”

Former student Dan Connelly (B.A. 2006) says,

“I have so much to thank Dr. Bonnie Sonnek for that it’s difficult to know where to begin . . . but I’ll try:

I am thankful for the introduction to Paulo Freire. I am thankful for our class discussions – and the space that was created and held for each of our voices and experiences. I am thankful for one-pagers. I am thankful for her inclusiveness and support.

As a working-class kid from Chicago, and the first to go to college in my family, I was acutely aware that academia was not created by, or for, people like me. During my first year in the program I was told by one staff

member that I would never be a teacher – presumably because of my resistance to adopt the costumes, language and values of the affluent class. I questioned myself. I questioned my ability, my efficacy and my agency. It’s true, I thought. Who do I think I am? I considered quitting the program.

Instead, I went to the thrift store and bought a cheap and

tattered pair of tan corduroy slacks, an obnoxiously wide brown tie, and a white dress shirt yellowed from age to wear to class each day. Dr. Sonnek pulled me aside, looked me up and down, and laughed.

And that’s what I love most about Bonnie. Both in and out of class, I always felt included, supported, and seen.

I am currently in San Francisco and I’ve been teaching for over 12 years now.”

The testimony of these students confirms the transformative work that Bonnie has done here at Western. She has touched the lives of her students deeply, and she has inspired them, as she has her colleagues, with her spirit of ambition, curiosity, and care.

It is with great admiration and affection that I thank Bonnie for her time, her imagination, her dedication to the Department of English, the College, the University, and the community.

# 2019 SIGMA TAU DELTA CONFERENCE IN ST. LOUIS

by Courtney Bender

The Phi Delta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta had a strong presence at this year's conference. We got to learn, share, and experience so much! This year, six students and two faculty members made the trek to St. Louis to share in the academia, sightseeing, and general celebration of nerdiness. Below are details about each student's participation in the conference.



## Kaylee Gundling

Gundling made a name for herself at this conference. She presented her creative piece “Director’s Cut (Abridged)” at the Fiction: The Americans panel (even though her story does not mention America and is not necessarily set there). Once the session had wrapped up, Gundling was approached by multiple persons hungry for more information. Aside from this professional presentation, Gundling shared poetry at Open Mic Night and the annual Mega Chapter Unofficial Poetry Night, but she also had a moment of infamy that earned her not one, but two awards. Each year, the conference presents Bad Poetry Night, a competition to come up with the most ridiculous, hilarious, and outrageous poetry you can. Gundling’s piece won first place in the category “Worst Bad Poem” as well as the memorable Bill Johnson Award, which is presented to the poet who drives Sigma Tau Delta Executive Director William C. Johnson out of the room. This same poem became a meme for both WIU students and various other attendees of the conference.

## Desiree Steele

Steele unlocked several achievements on this trip, from presenting a stimulating paper to rocking Bad Poetry, to killing it at networking. During the Digital Media panel on Saturday afternoon, Steele presented her paper “Gender & Sexuality in *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*.” Before the panel began, Steele was chatting with her panelmates, laughing, and shaking off her nerves. Earlier in the conference, she was approached by another attendee to discuss the possibility of publishing her piece in a *Legend of Zelda* essay anthology. Steele also presented at Bad Poetry Night, and was approached and complimented for her piece, “White Fluids.” Blending comedy and social critique with classic Steele flair, the piece compared the portions of the white population to mayonnaise.



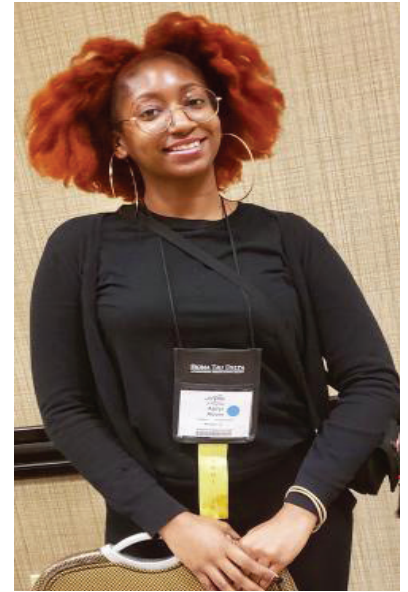
## Courtney Bender

Coming along on the trip as a driver/general assistant/guest, Bender wore several unofficial hats. She attended panels, took photos of her peers presenting, read “Driving in St. Louis” at Bad Poetry Night, and shared a poem at the Mega Chapter poetry reading. She assisted a peer in the process of procuring a suitable outfit for the Red & Black Gala ahead of the conference. She actively asked questions at nearly every panel she attended. She eagerly drank in the papers and creative pieces being shared. While she did not personally present at the conference, Bender paid close attention to the goings-on, in order to write the best piece she could to cover the event for *The Mirror & the Lamp*.



## Apryl Moore

Apryl “Pryl” Moore engaged with the organization on multiple levels at this conference. Bright and early at 8:00 AM on Friday morning, Moore presented “The Sadomasochism and Meaning of Addie Bundren” at the Southern Gothic panel. True to her persistent spirit, the early hour had no apparent effect on Moore’s ability to share her paper and field questions with professional poise. In addition to presenting, Moore assisted at the registration table and attended various conference events with our chapter adviser, Dr. Timothy Helwig. These events were related to Moore’s endeavor of running for the position of Student Representative for the Midwestern Chapter. At the Midwestern Regional Caucus, Moore was unanimously voted in as our new representative. Congratulations and thank you in advance for your service, Ms. Moore!



## Gayla “Nell” Bean

Bringing energy and an abundance of smiles to the trip, Bean volunteered throughout the conference. One of her duties was working the registration table, assisting other attendees in registering their presence at the conference as well as handing out ID lanyards, gala tickets, conference programs, and information. In addition, Bean chaired for the Fiction: The Americans creative writing panel on Thursday afternoon. Bean opened the panel, introduced the speakers, and facilitated the flow of the session.



## Emma Dayhoff

Almost never seen without her iconic leather jacket, Dayhoff not only shared her writing at this national event, but was also arguably the MVP of a particular chapter outing. Presenting at the Creative Non-Fiction: Love and Other Stories panel, Dayhoff read “Life Got in the Way.” As for her MVP status, Dayhoff demonstrated a remarkable quantity of patience. After a chapter dinner outing, a few members came upon a rolled ice cream shop and enthusiastically went inside. Dayhoff remained to await their return with the Drs. Helwig. To the distress of the ice cream-seekers, the line was slow moving, as rolled ice cream is not only a treat, but a process to make. The supervising professors had a meeting to make and notified those inside the shop that they were leaving them in Dayhoff’s capable hands. Knowing that all inside the shop were adults and could probably find their way back to the hotel, Dayhoff could have left. But, she did not. Instead, she endured the wait, perched on the curb and helped her fellow Sigma Tau Delta students back to the Hilton. Thank you Ms. Dayhoff, you really were an MVP that night.



# AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER DIRECTOR—DR. MORROW

by Katie Green



Image Courtesy of Dr. Morrow

This fall we have a brand new University Writing Center director— Dr. Christopher Morrow. As a consultant in the writing center, I was curious to know what his transition into the program was like. I also pondered about how his collaboration with the previous director (Dr. Neil Baird) went. Additionally, I wanted to know what his hopes and plans were for the writing center, and if anything new and exciting was to come in the future. Out of pure curiosity and inquisitiveness, I sought to have my questions answered; I met up with Dr. Morrow and conducted a formal interview with him, where I received all the answers to my questions. Below is the exact conversation we had last week at the Malpass Library:

**How did you feel when you were given the news that you were the new Director of the Writing Center here on Campus?**

“Well, it was in June, and I was pretty excited. That was followed immediately by a fair bit of nervousness as well. But, definitely overall, I was looking forward to the prospect of it.”

**Was there anything you were specifically excited about doing or experiencing as director of the Writing Center?**

“Well, I spent a couple years as the director of Graduate Studies in English, and I knew I liked to work with graduate students in and outside of the classroom as well as on a professional development level. I’m always interested to hear what people are working on, too. I’ve been good friends with Professor Baird since he got here; he started here a year after I did, and so, you could say, we grew up as professors together. He had talked about the writing center for years and how much he loved it. So, I knew that I would also get to work with graduate and undergraduate students from across the curriculum. I enjoy mentoring students, so that was something that really appealed to me. I also love that everything we do is so generated towards helping student writers, and that’s something that many students struggle with; writing is tough! Writing is tough and it’s scary. And being part of an organization that provides a safe space for writers to come and really hone their craft is really empowering. That was something that I was really excited to be involved with.”

**So, what was it like transitioning to be the Director of the UWC? Was it difficult?**

“Well... it wasn’t difficult, but it was definitely crazy. Despite my background in Shakespeare and early-modern literature, I have taught composition and writing at

levels so it wasn’t that I was concerned about the writing. However, it has been a number of years since I have been in a writing center in working context. I had worked a little bit in the writing center as a graduate, but not very much. And, it’s been a long time, so I was little nervous about that— especially because Neil (Dr. Baird) was leaving and I would have to run training and orientation by myself. I spent some time working with Neil getting ready for that and I did a lot of reading. Like many academics who are faced with a problem, I read my way out of it. I read *The Writing Director’s Guidebook*, two different consulting manuals and a number of essays on writing center studies. I wanted to immerse myself in research so that I could inform my training and my policies.”

**What was it like collaborating with Dr. Baird about the rules, regulations, and his hopes for the writing center?**

“It was really fun, because, number one: me and Dr. Baird are also long-time cycling partners and have ridden our bikes maybe 7,000 miles together over the last 8 or 9 years and we’ve talked about the writing center a lot during those rides. If I’m not mistaken, it was on a ride where I joked and said, ‘Maybe I’ll take over the writing center.’ I really was just joking, but he said, ‘Really? You should totally do it!’ We came back to that topic on a later ride and spoke about what that meant, and I really hadn’t seen myself as someone in that position. He real

ly got to talking to me about how he knows the ways I interact with students and he really showed me the aspects of what I already did that matched well with the writing center. Training with him in the summer was really bittersweet because my best friend here was leaving. I could see him getting excited about it though, and he would tell me about things to think about. I could tell it was really reinvigorating him. We met up numerous times and he gave me all his materials, which was super nice. We went really in-depth on his version of training so I leaned on that pretty heavily. Maybe I'll change it somewhere down the road, but if it works, it works!

He also got me excited about the work we do in a more scholarly way. Neil and I have been collaborating on an essay together on the intersection of game studies and writing center studies, and we are thinking about how we can use the concepts of heuristics and games to impact the way consultants work with clients. If in June you asked me in October whether or not I would be doing research in writing center studies. I wouldn't have believed you."

**Is the writing center all that you thought it was going to be? Or is it different than you thought?**

"That's a good question. I think for the most part it's fulfilled my good expectations and has not fulfilled any of my bad ones. I was really worried that I'd be dealing with schedule issues more than I have; I was really intimidated by the schedule when I first tried to put it together, and I was convinced that all the consultants would hate me. However, everyone seemed to be pretty happy with their schedules which was good. In that way, it's been what I expected, but the things that surprised me was how much I enjoy watching consultants work with writers. You know, I always say that the director's office here feels like an aquarium. I always joke, 'are you the fish or am I the fish?' because I'm always looking out of it and sometimes the consultants get nervous because I start listening to them and they can tell. But I'm just so excited to see the work that they're doing and it really makes me proud to be part of it—especially since this is such a great group of consultants. I think that you guys have done such an amazing job, and you're such good people that really want to help others. I was maybe a little bit worried that consultants would be a little more cynical and treat it more as a paycheck or something that they didn't want to do."

**What are your hopes for the writing center?**

"Well, my hopes for the writing center are that we continue to serve a wide variety of the students, faculty, and community members here. I would like to see the percentage of individual users increase. We had over 800 individual people use the writing center last year and I'd like to see that increase. I definitely want the writing center to be the first place that people on this campus think about when they want help with writing or think about writing. In addition to class assignments, we've worked with clients on personal writing, on career writing, and on writing for student organizations. When people think about writing and Western, I want them to think about the writing center."

**Are there any changes you're going to make to the writing center?**

"As you know, I am definitely someone who loves to throw things against the wall and see what sticks. So I sometimes have more ideas than I have the time to work with. I've formed the task force board to draw on consultants to help me work on some of these things. A couple initiatives I'm exploring to the point where I'm comfortable saying that you might see them in the near future is some sort of 'grammar hotline' or 'instant messenger grammar service' where we're able to answer the quick questions that students have. We already serve the larger issues where students have the half-hour to hour-long sessions, but students sometimes just need to know, for instance, the difference between a colon and a semi-colon. That's something that I want us to be able to provide. Ideally, if we could find a way for clients to schedule over instant messenger, I think that would be good too, and I'm looking forward to more ways to increase the visibility of the writing center. We're kind of tucked away on the 3rd floor of Malpass Library. It is a wonderful space, but it is hard to find. We are also talking about 'tutoring on the go' where we send tutors to different places to do micro sessions with a gathering of students. We're also looking at some other things; students have always wanted to drop off a paper and get feedback. That's something that not every writing center does, but that's probably the most common question we get from students over email, and so that's something we're exploring. Does that mean we're going to change it? Probably not in the near future, but it's something that we want to see if it's viable, and if it helps student writers then we'll do it."

# GRAD STUDENT TO FULL-TIME ACADEMIC: A TRANSFORMATION

by Sheldon Gaskell

On May 30th, 2017, my birthday, I packed my truck and left Macomb, Illinois, vowing to never return. The 5:00 a.m. sky was clear until the upper troposphere where a layer of shale clouds blocked the sun and cast the land in an alien blue light. Solitary trees, newly leafed and grasping skyward, scattered the prairie in this wonder-landscape I would surely never see again. I wondered what would become of me after this Midwest graduate school venture, and, even more jarring, how my studies mattered to the greater scheme of life.

Final student essays were read and graded weeks ago. Graduation had commenced, goodbyes were shared with colleagues with promises of “see you again soon!” (some promises were kept, and others have yet to be met). Despite the shock and thrill of it all, I was not yet finished with my thesis: “Digital Schizophrenia and Technogenesis in Leos Carax’s *Holy Motors*.” My research of evolving film techniques toward the digital medium in French cinema (and what this technological transformation signifies for the human identity) had been an obsession for a time but had quickly devolved to feeling like a process of making sense of nonsense, of peering through the haze of depression spells, thoughts of hopelessness, and recurring daymares, questioning if there was really one reality or many and if there was a point to doing all this work when the product of my achievements would be returning home to my parent’s house in Connecticut, highly educated and somehow unemployed.

My last few weeks in Macomb were spent in a caffeinated daze, jittery, skeleton-eyed, bicycling back and forth between my one room apartment and a cubicle in Malpass Library with books on literary theory, film studies, and philosophy with Deleuze, Derrida, Barthes, Hayles, and McLuhan bursting through my polyester sports bag. I would read for a time in the library, take a coffee break, eat, move location (sometimes to Simpkins, sometimes to Sullivan Taylor Coffee House), write, drink, feast, move, read, skim, caffeinate, reread, and write again with a slew of wasted moments in between. Sometimes I arrived home at 3:00 a.m. when the town was silent as a cemetery, the squeak of my bike seat the only sound of life. The bike was from Walmart and was broken, which made the frequent rides a difficult balance of sitting, standing, and risking collapse into the crumbling, potholed streets I had traveled and called home for the past two years.



*Sheldon Gaskell (M.A. 2017) is an instructor in the First-Year Rhetoric and Writing Program at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs*

Overweight, alone, depressed, and somehow always tired, I sometimes made a detour on the way to the library for an egg and bacon bagel (I’m vegan now) at Einstein Bros. Bagels in the Union (though they had closed shortly after the end of the semester) or stopped by Yummy Chen’s for Orange Chicken and Rice, which I would devour in one sitting while watching *Better Call Saul* and other shows—between critical thesis re-viewings of *Holy Motors* (2012)—that fed the procrastination demon within me. My apartment was a half garage studio space behind three small homes (nestled like an egg in the company of three large hens), and my window was constantly open as I could not afford AC. Through this window emanated sounds of bird calls, buzzing insects, and car engines from the road (the apartment was leagues better than my previous roach and bat-infested residence, which cost me a month of hospital visits and thousands of dollars for rabies shots—long story). Sometimes while writing, generally mid-afternoons when I was my most neurotic, I would shout and cuss at computer malfunctions, lengthy Spotify advertisements, and other minor infractions against my mental focus and then hope the neighbors had not heard me and were not at that moment spinning gossip webs about the lunatic who lived among them.

One neighbor was a kind Vietnam War veteran who occasionally shared stories with me of his time at war. He hated the notion of soldiers as heroes, despised it in fact, said that soldiers do atrocious acts that change them forever, said he was one of these soldiers and hated himself for it sometimes. This perspective came as a shock to me, as, in addition to my thesis I had been working on an intensive editing project for a book written by Mark Jurras, a WWII veteran who I consider a hero that experienced a very different side of war. Our talks inspired my creative urge to write (not my thesis, unfortunately) stories of complicated, ideologically diverse characters in challenging scenarios who somehow find meaning in their lives. I wrote these thoughts on post-it-notes, napkins, scrap paper, and the back of old lesson plans and grocery lists I still hoard like dragon's gold. These ideas have yet to emerge in writing, but I'm hopeful they will one day take root and sprout into future plots of narrative wilderness.

Drafts upon drafts were drawn and redrawn with post-grad memories embedded between these thesis revisions. When I returned home to Connecticut on May 31st, 2017, after the 20-hour drive East, life was a blend of thesis finalization, family re-conditioning, job searching, freelance editing, and attempts at creative writing. In one intensive month, my thesis expanded from a 30-page archipelago of mismatched quotes and musings to 100 pages of somewhat polished prose (an achievement I never could have accomplished without the gracious support of my advisor Dr. Di Carmine and readers Dr. Banash and Dr. Cole). In July, I successfully defended my thesis and could now focus on job applications and finishing my years-long editing project: *One Man's Journey Through War and Peace*. There were moments of joy, patches of self-deprivation, and Facebook-fueled bouts of unproductivity, as well as many hours spent filing online applications for teaching and editing opportunities across the nation (New England, New York, Pennsylvania, the West Coast), and crafting "perfect" letters of intent, different versions of my curriculum vitae, and variations on my teaching philosophy only to receive automated rejections in response. I finally landed an interview with Manchester Community College in Connecticut and earned a position as adjunct instructor teaching developmental reading and writing. To supplement my income, I also worked as a substitute teacher at local high schools. With every opportunity, I worked to refine my resume

through developing the creative and professional skills required to make me an attractive candidate for full-time instruction in higher education.

I moved to Colorado to be close to my girlfriend (we met as undergraduates) in January 2018, where I continued to grind the adjunct gears in the University of Colorado Succeed Program. There, I taught three sections of rhetoric and writing to students in two Denver-area high schools, planned lessons, graded essays, and kept applying for full-time positions in my nontraditional office spaces: libraries, local coffee shops, and sometimes in the car I borrowed from my girlfriend's family. In February, my edited book was published independently by the author, an early reassurance that all this work was not for nothing. In the spring and early summer, I received three promising job interviews, all of which alluded me. Finally, in late July I received word from my current employer, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, that I was accepted to teach four semester-long theme-focused courses in writing and research. To my relief and great enthusiasm, this temporary position has since developed into a permanent faculty position. For the first time in my life, I realized that this dream of a career in academia was actually possible.

During my long drive to Connecticut in May, 2017, I had much time to envision who I wanted to be as a professional. At some point, I would write on paper who this person was and the steps I would take to transform myself into this identity. I knew I had to do as much as possible as widely as possible to get to this stage: apply for jobs across the United States, travel, feel and contemplate joy and sorrow, forget grudges, and continuously appreciate the treasured relationships of colleagues, friends, and family. There would be difficult, cloudy patches. Like Illinois thunderstorms these would explode, intensely ferocious at times, and then just as quickly break into sunny slices of paradise. I would have to keep moving through moments of slothfulness or despair until I embraced the dreamy vision of what I knew existed beyond the fog. There is always the presence of sun in reach—keep grasping.

I did return to Macomb, and I was reminded of the roots that supported me along this journey. I am happy to hear student stories and answer any questions about post-grad life or teaching in the university setting. Please e-mail me: [sheldongaskell@gmail.com](mailto:sheldongaskell@gmail.com)

# 2018-2019 AWARDS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Each spring, the English Department awards \$20,000 in scholarships and fellowships for our graduate and undergraduate students. We are pleased to announce the following students were awarded English scholarships this spring for the 2019-2020 academic year.

## Undergraduate Scholarship and Award Winners

Barbara & John Blackburn Scholarship – **Mackenzie Bennett**; Paul Blackford Scholarship – **Courtney Bender**; Olive Fite American Literature Scholarship – **Carmen Bizarri**; Irving Garwood Shakespeare Scholarship – **Courtney Bender**; Robert Hodges English Education Scholarship – **Adrienne Tinsley**; Lila Linder Scholarship – **Ashley Hanson** and **Kevin Titus**; Karen Mann Essay Award in Literature and Film – **Kevin Titus**; Alfred Lindsey Memorial Scholarship – **Kelsey Rentfro-Cline**; John Merrett Scholarship in British Literature – **Courtney Bender**; Beth M. Stiffler Scholarship – **Carmen Bizarri**; Nai-Tung Ting Scholarship – **Abidemi “Bonita” Akinbo**; Wanninger Foundation Scholarship – **Nicole Foster**.

Scholar of the Year Scholarship – **Ashley Hanson**

## Writing Awards

Bruce H. Leland Essay Contest: English 100, Introduction to Writing – 1st Place, **Christina Ann Liber**; 2nd Place, **Devin Torres**; 3rd Place, **Jovanni Montalvo**; Honorable Mention, **Brandon Villa**. English 180, College Writing I – 1st Place, **Brandon Oleson**; 2nd Place, **Manuel Luna**; 3rd Place, **Judson Henry**; Honorable Mention, **Lenora Wildermuth**. English 280, College Writing II – 1st Place, **Sofija Micevic**; 2nd Place, **Gracie Richardson**; 3rd Place, **Kelly Joiner**; Honorable Mention, **Reilly Bacorn**.

Lois C. Bruner Creative Nonfiction Awards – 1st Place, **Marissa Purdum**; 2nd Place, **Marcus Sweeten**; 3rd Place, **Kendrick Keller**. Cordell Larner Award in Fiction – 1st Place, **Adam Norris**; 2nd Place, **Angelique Herrera**; 3rd Place, **Brandon Williams**. Cordell Larner Award in Poetry – 1st Place, **Eric Short**; 2nd Place, **Marcus Sweeten**; 3rd Place, **Janae Imeri**.

## Graduate Scholarship, Fellowship, and Award Winners

John Mahoney Research Fellowship – **Francesca Hamm**; Ron & Leslie Walker Graduate Fellowships – **Abidemi “Bonita” Akinbo** and **Savannah Dupont**; Syndy M. Conger

Essay Award – **Nick Nusbaumer**; Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award – **Nick Nusbaumer**; Honorable Mentions, **Dakota Carlson** and **Kristin Sheppard**.

## Departmental and College Scholar Awards

The Departmental Scholar awards are sponsored by the Illinois Centennial Honors College. Each semester, departments select the top student in each of their majors graduating that semester. Students are selected based on g.p.a. as well as honors and activities. Those selected receive a medalion to be worn at graduation. Our winners for this year are **Ashley Hanson** and **John Castle**.

## Announcements

### Current Undergraduate Students

**Kaylee Gundling** and **Desiree Steele** organized and led the Feminist Discovery Reading Group for a second year, surveying work by and about women from the ancient drama *Antigone* to contemporary illustrated novel *The Fox and the Star* every Thursday in the student lounge and reading room.

**Gayla Bean** attended the National Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Saint Louis, helping to chair panels and volunteering at the registration table.

**Courtney Bender** attended the National Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Saint Louis.

**Jenna Brown** won the Phi Kappa Phi Best Research Paper Award this spring for her essay, “Can Fiction Represent History?”

**Emma Dayhoff** presented, “Life Got in the Way,” an original piece of creative nonfiction at the National Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Saint Louis. She also won a CAS Undergraduate Research Grant to support her travel.

**Kaylee Gundling** presented, “Director’s Cut (Abridged),” an original piece of fiction at the National Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Saint Louis. She also won a CAS Undergraduate Research Grant to support her travel.

**Apryl Moore** presented a critical paper, “The Sadomasochism and Meaning of Addie Bundren in Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*” at the National Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Saint Louis. Her paper won First place for the Best Undergraduate Conference Paper. She also won a CAS Undergraduate Research Grant and Norman and Carmelita Teeter Undergrad-

uate Research Award to support her travel. At the conference, Apryl was elected to serve on the Board of Directors as the 2019-2020 Midwestern Student Representative and will represent the interests of the 150 chapters at four-year colleges and universities in the region.

**Desiree Steele** presented her paper “Gender and Sexuality in *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*” at the National Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Saint Louis. She also accepted a fully-funded offer to begin the Ph.D. program in Games, Culture, and Media at The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

### Current Graduate Students

**Nick Nusbaumer** presented his creative work “My Beautiful Dark Twisted (Urban) Fantasy: How Kanye West and Richard Mayhew Overcome the Below in order to Conquer the Above” at the Popular Culture Association Conference in Washington D. C.

**Tralynn Pullen** traveled to Atlanta and visited the National Center for Civil and Human Rights Museum and the World of Coca-Cola; to Kansas City and visited the National Negro League Baseball Museum and the National Jazz Museum; to St. Louis and visited the National Blues Museum and Gateway Arch Museum. She also attended the annual Popular Culture Association Conference and visited the National Museum of African American History in Washington D. C.

**Kristin Sheppard** traveled to New York and Philadelphia to research Romanticism and Edgar Allan Poe. Her travel was supported by a Mahoney award. She also presented her paper “Representation of Mental Illness in Games: How Player Choice and Limitations Affects Characters” at the Popular Culture Association Conference in Washington D. C.

**Rhobie Underwood** presented her paper “Markova: A Comfort Gay Victim or an Illusioned Drag Queen? His Stories of War, Homosexuality and Violence in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation” at the 6th annual WIU Graduate Research Conference. She has accepted a position as an adjunct instructor at Black Hawk College in Moline, IL.

### Alumni

**Kimberly Ackers** (B.A. 2015) is working as a Child and Youth Program Assistant at the Ramstein Air Force base in Germany.

**Alex Ayers** (M.A. 2015) accepted a position as Assistant Director of Peer Learning and Tutoring Programs at Stanford University in California.

**Thomas Boyd** (B.A. 2013) accepted a position at Burlington High school teaching English and Speech in Burlington, IA.

**Molly Cameron** (B.A. 2018), who serves as a graduate teaching assistant and is pursuing a master’s in English at the University of South Dakota, was awarded best creative response to the Common Reader, Tess Taylor’s poetry collection *Work & Days* at the National Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Saint Louis.

**Tyler Cregger** (B.A. 2017) accepted a position teaching English at Central Lee Community School in Iowa.

**Sheldon Gaskell** (M.A. 2017) is an instructor in the First-Year Rhetoric and Writing Program at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

**Duncan Gingrich** (B.A. 2017) accepted a position as Communications and Public Relations Assistant at Sterling Schools Foundation in Sterling, IL.

**Annie Gortowski** (B.A. 2017) accepted a position teaching English at John F. Kennedy high school in Chicago.

**Molly Hall** (B.A. 2016) accepted a position as Chief of Staff at Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois in Chicago.

**Haley Helgesen** (B.A. 2017) accepted a fully-funded offer to begin the Ph.D. program in Games, Culture, and Media at The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

**Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt** (M.A. 2014) defended her doctoral dissertation, “Evidence and Epistemology in Early Modern English Drama” at Texas A&M University in Austin.

**Kasi Henshaw** (B.A. 2015) accepted a position as Associate Director of Donor Relations at Knox College in Galesburg, IL.

**Sara Hopkins** (B.A. 2017) accepted a position as National Sales Support at Paylocity in Arlington, IL.

**Chris Ivy** (M.A. 2016) was accepted with full funding into the Ph.D. program in English at the University of Oregon.

**Max Keil** (B.A. 2017) accepted a position as Learning and Development Manager at TMX Finance in Texas.

**Ethan Knight** (B.A. 2013) is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of South Carolina. He just finished his second year as Assistant Director of First-Year English at South Carolina, where he was lead editor and author for the 2018 and 2019 editions of the Carolina Reader. He presented his

paper “‘The American Scholar’ in First-Year English” at this year’s American Literature Association conference in Boston and attended the International Whitman symposium in New York.

**Ashley Lehman** (B.A. 2017) accepted a position teaching English at Marissa High School in Illinois.

**Lucas Marshall** (M.A. 2016) accepted a position as Content Manager at Milwaukee Tool in Milwaukee.

**Jessica Lowell Mason** (M.A. 2014) published her book of poetry, *Straight Jacket* (Finishing Line Press).

**Maric McLean** (B.A. 2017) accepted a position teaching English at Springfield High School in Illinois.

**Erin Moore** (M.A. 2006) accepted a position as Head of Media Services at Saint Ambrose University in Davenport, IA.

**Alexis Phares** (B.A. 2017) accepted a position teaching at Harmony High School in Saint Cloud, FL, where she also coaches debate and JV cheerleading.

**Veronica Popp** (M.A. 2015) is a doctoral candidate in Multicultural Women’s and Gender Studies at Texas Woman’s University.

**Erica Salmonson** (M.A. 2017) accepted a position as Instructor of English and Writing Center Director at Illinois College.

**Amanda Stewart** (B.A. 2017) teaches 7th grade language arts at Spoon River Valley School in Illinois.

**Abigail Tichler** (M.A. 2015) accepted a position Haring News Network Product Manager at Clear Digital Media in Chicago.

**Tess Tyler** (B.A. 2018) accepted a position teaching English at Havana High School in Havana, IL.

**Scott Waldyn** (B.A. 2009) is a Digital Content Editor at Prime Publishing in Chicago, and Editor-in-Chief of the online magazine *Literary Orphans*.

**Eliza Wells** (M.A. 2017) accepted a position as Copy Writer and Content Creator at Social Spice Media in Camarillo, California.

**Jared Worley** (M.A. 2017) accepted a position as a Quality Reviewer for Systems Services Enterprises in Saint Louis

## Faculty

**Marjorie Allison** presented “When Ghosts Won’t Stay Dead” at the Modern Language Association Annual Conference in Chicago, and she won the Centennial Honors College Award for Excellence in Mentoring.

**Penny Clause** received the certificate acknowledging her twenty years of continuous service to Western.

**Merrill Cole** published “The Queer Repression of Jacques Lacan” in *After Lacan: Literature, Theory, and Psychoanalysis in the Twenty-First Century*. His poem, “Kublai Khan in Transylvania,” appeared in *The Main Street Rag*. Part of his 2012 translation of Anita Berber and Sebastian Droste’s Dances of Vice, Horror, and Ecstasy is now featured in the new game, *Berlin the Wicked City*. Merrill and his husband Rick spent a month in Nice, France, and he reports that “we also traveled through the French Riviera and to Rome. I used to be fully fluent in French and was delighted to find I’d lost none of it!”

**Roberta Di Carmine** became the new Director of Graduate Studies in English at WIU while continuing to teach film and coordinate the Interdisciplinary Film Minor. She published her second book *Cultural Metamorphoses in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (Peter Lang 2018). She was invited to present her latest book at the Friday Faculty Spotlight Series sponsored by the Expanding Cultural Diversity Project at WIU, and in April her new book was nominated by the Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago to represent the Italian Institutes of Culture in the Midwest at the Flaiano International Literature Awards in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Everett Hamner** published his book *Editing the Soul Science and Fiction in the Genome Age* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press). He edited a special issue of *Science Fiction Film and Television* (11.3) which included his essays “Introduction: *Orphan Black* as Protest,” and “Sterility, Abominations and the Optical Illusions of *Orphan Black*.” He organized the session “Climate Change, Resistance, and Narrative/Art” for Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts in Toronto, where he also presented his paper “Imagining Unsuicide: Whither Climate Change Narratives?” The writers Richard Powers, Omar El Akkad, and Charlie Jane Anders visited his classes via video conference, and he had breakfast in Toronto with the great Margaret Atwood at her favorite coffee shop.

**Tim Helwig** won the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Faculty Award for Mentoring Undergraduate Research.



**William Knox** presented “Fire Lights and Flashlights: Melodramatic Signs of Socio-Political Inequality in John Ford’s *The Grapes of Wrath*” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ conference in Macomb and “Not Finding (and Finding) Private Honors Support” at the Upper Midwestern Regional Honors Council Conference in Wisconsin. He made presentations and wrote extensively for the Macomb community, including “Redefining Sustainability Common Sense” at Earthfest and “Sustainability and Situational Awareness” for the McDonough County Voice. He also mentored undergraduate Mariah Dickson to her win of the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship.

**Dan Malachuk** published “Antebellum Natural Rights Liberalism,” in the edited collection, *The Political Thought of the Civil War* (University Press of Kansas, 2018); he also won the Centennial Honors College Award for Excellence in Mentoring.

**Christopher Morrow** won the College of Arts and Sciences Award for Excellence in Teaching.

**Rich Ness** was a participant on the panel “A Knack for the Unexpected: Why Alan Rudolph’s Films Matter” that was part of the symposium “The Unreal Reality of Alan Rudolph” at the Cinetopia retrospective on Rudolph in Ann Arbor. He presented the paper “Not Alone in the Dark: Alan Rudolph’s Cinematic Symbiosis” and also participated in various activities at the event. He organized and moderated “The Secret Lives of Filmmakers: An Insider’s View of the Industry with Alan and Joyce Rudolph,” presented as a Special Event at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies annual conference in Seattle. At the annual meeting of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies he also participated in the “Cinema and Media Studies and the Study of Moving

Image Journalism” seminar. In Macomb, he organized the summer film series, The Dead Filmmakers Society, now in its nineteenth year.

**Shazia Rahman** published her book *Place and Postcolonial Ecofeminism Pakistani Women’s Literary and Cinematic Fictions* (Univ. of Nebraska Press). She also presented “Postcolonial International Conflict Through an Animal Studies Lens” at the South Asian Literary Association Conference in Chicago.

**Alisha White** presented, along with her student, Alexis Phares, “Six Thinking Hats: Teaching Critical Thinking through Discussion Questions” for the Future is Now Roundtable Session; she also presented “Symbolizing Experience: Personal Reflection through Body Autobiography Drawings” for the Coalition on Arts and Literacy Roundtable at the annual conference of the National Council of Teachers of English in Houston. She also won the College of Arts and Science Outstanding Faculty Award for Excellence in Multicultural Teaching.

**Erika Wurth** published her novel *You Who Enter Here* (SUNY 2019) and her short story, “Not Like Jesus but I am a Boy,” in *River Styx*. She will participate in the *Tin House* Summer Workshop and the *Kenyon Review* Writers Workshop. This spring, she read her work Metro State University in Denver and proposed and chaired two panels at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP): “Native American Voices: A Reading from Recent Works in Native Letters”; “Indigenous Fiction: Intersections in the United States and Canada,” and “Outsiders in Minority Fiction, When You’re Not From Where You’re Supposed to Be.” Her essay “Learning from the Lone Ranger” appeared in *American Book Review*.



## SPRING 2019 SIGMA TAU DELTA INDUCTION

On April 29, 2019, 29 new members were inducted into the Phi Delta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. This is possibly the largest number of inductees we have ever had! The ceremony, which was held at Drs. Timothy and Magdelyn Helwig’s home, included the presenting of pins and certificates, the announcing of next school year’s officers, and cake.

To all the new members: welcome! We are excited to work and learn with you.

# THE VICTORIANS, THE INTERNET, AND THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES: DR. PAUL FYFE PRESENTS AT WIU

by Courtney Bender

On April 12th, 2019, Dr. Paul Fyfe of North Carolina State University traveled to WIU in order to deliver two presentations: a workshop about the digital humanities in the classroom and the lecture “From the Telegraph to the Internet: How Information Lost Its Body.” Dr. Fyfe was also kind enough to sit down for an interview about his work and life.



*Dr. Fyfe explains the connections between the internet and nineteenth-century railway and telegraph networks*

In answer to the interview’s opening question about what he is currently reading, Dr. Fyfe not only shared the texts in question, but also made an important point about the connotation of what a professor reads: “Sometimes I feel like that question privileges the novel as the only appropriate answer.” He often uses this very question as an icebreaker for his own classes to lead into a discussion about what reading is and what his students assume about it. Dr. Fyfe also explained that the Digital Humanities are a way to analyze texts through computational elements. He shared that his favorite part of traveling to other colleges for events like this is the teaching

element. Rather than standing up at the podium and acting as an elusive font of knowledge above the heads of the listeners, Dr. Fyfe treasures the opportunity to actually teach and explain his ideas. This was made evident in both the presentations he made later in the day.

At the workshop, Dr. Fyfe presented about how he and his students engage with the Digital Humanities. One of the most prominent aspects of this subject was the idea of making an argument through objects. For example, Dr. Fyfe assigns a steampunk project in which students must make an argument by creating a steampunk object and writing a paper to explain the argument within it. One example was a time capsule the student manufactured with power tools that held her essay and related to the not quite tangible idea she was exploring. Another was climate change survival headgear that included a working air conditioning element. Outside of steampunk, Dr. Fyfe still uses this method of making to evaluate students. Two individuals more based in the computer sciences than English created a book surveillance set that included a motion sensor camera which would snap a photo every time a book was opened. Students outside of English are the norm for these classes. This exploration of analysis outside of typical essays invites students to engage with a different kind of expression. In addition to discussing pedagogy, steampunk, and the digital humanities, attendees of the workshop also learned about the strange and provocative terms “whale punk” and “book guillotine.”

Later that evening, at his lecture, Dr. Fyfe took two seemingly unrelated concepts—the Victorian era and the internet—and brought them together. It turns out that the public reception and media coverage of the railway and the internet have similar, almost rhyming themes. Both experienced rapid growth and caused an economic bubble, were featured in extensively positive and extensively pessimistic press, were complained of being unfamiliar and alien, are attributed as the causes of physical maladies, and have been attempted to be comprehended through the body. This last point served as the main idea of the lecture—both the railroad of the Victorians and the internet of the modern age have been explained with physical, bodily metaphors, and in

these attempts, we have disembodied the new technologies. It is rather difficult to point to the internet. The closest we can manage is touching the tubes in the many areas of the earth in which the hardwired aspects of the internet lie. But beyond that, we have to use metaphor to conceptualize the internet.

Dr. Fyfe was a delight to have on campus. He answered questions with passion and thorough thought, brought elements of comedy into his presentations, and managed not only to create a bridge between the Victorian and the contemporary, but also between our understandings of them.

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## PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE

**Ishimine Goins just completed her M.A. in English, focusing on film studies, queer theory, and African-American literature, film, and culture.**

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?** In a world where perfect and happiness exists (air quotes), I would picture myself traveling the world, documenting lives and telling stories through film. Being a filmmaker/photographer who can illuminate unrepresented voices, identities, sexualities, bodies, etc., and make a change in society while doing so—that is my idea of perfect happiness.

**What is your greatest fear?** My greatest fear is running out of time. Not necessarily the concept of dying or aging, but the idea of time. Running out of time before I accomplish everything I set out to do.

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?** A combination of over-thinking and the need to perfect everything.

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?** Small-mindedness.

**Which living person do you most admire?** Lena Waithe. She is a Black queer creator who I admire based on her tenacity and personal journey and she has opened many doors to enable my existence as a Black queer storyteller and future director.

**What is your greatest extravagance?** I have an expensive passion: photography/ filmmaking isn't cheap.

**What is your current state of mind?** Two days ago I graduated from Western Illinois University with a Master degree in English. In my mind, I currently would like to be employed with a six-figure salary.

**What do you most dislike about your appearance?** I honestly wish I were taller. Although 5'8 is relatively tall for a "woman" by society's standards, two more inches wouldn't hurt me.

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?** All forms of art, but Music was definitely my first love.



**When and where were you happiest?** My childhood was the happiest time of my life. I was born in 1986, so I grew up during a time when children played outside and enjoyed the outdoors until the sun went down and before the street lights were on.

**Which talent would you most like to have?** I wish I could master the piano.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?** Going back to college after spending twelve years in the military and recently obtaining my Master's degree is something I consider to be my greatest achievement thus far.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?** I would honestly like to come back as myself. Although I seldom have regrets, I would use that as an opportunity to do things differently.

**What is your most treasured possession?** My sneaker collection is both a guilty pleasure and treasured possession.

**What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?** Giving up on life and just existing.

**What is your favorite occupation?** Currently, for me, that's being a creator and telling stories through the medium of film.

**What is your most marked characteristic?** I can communicate and connect with various types of people despite our differences.

**What do you most value in your friends?** I appreciate when people are transparent and honest about who they are.

**Who are your favorite writers?** James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, bell hooks, Octavia Butler, Langston Hughes, and many more.

**Which historical figure do you most identify with?** James Baldwin. We are Leos; We are writers; We are activist; We are queer.

We hope you enjoy the sixth print edition of *The Mirror & the Lamp*. The goal of our magazine is to bring together students, faculty, and alumni of Western Illinois University's Department of English.

Please keep us informed of your recent activities and achievements. Please email your news to our department secretary, Tiffany Dimmick at [tr-dimmick@wiu.edu](mailto:tr-dimmick@wiu.edu)

You can also find more stories in our online edition: <https://mirrorandthelamp.org/>

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**SIGMA TAU DELTA**  
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY