Richman's historical tour of Beacon Hill
Retired Suffolk English Professor Gerald Richman (left) educates current English Department Chair Bryan Trabold (and a group of others) during his second annual Tour of Beacon Hill on Oct. 25. With decades of research on the literal and literary histories of the area surrounding the University, Richman weaves the story of where we are as arising from where we've been. From the wilder and more debaucherous days when this place went by another name through Scollay Square, which was here from 1838 until the early 1960s zeal for "urban renewal" tore it down. This year's tour ended at The Red Hat on Bowdoin street, which Richman called "the last remnant of Scollay Square and a Suffolk tradition."

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Critics and poets in conversation

Professor George Kalogeris (right) introduces David Ferry, Michael Longley, and Edna Longley during "A Dialogue In & About Poetry" at the Poetry Center on Oct. 10. The Longleys are both accomplished critics living in Ireland, and were able to travel together since they each had significant events to attend here. Edna was just inducted into the American Association of Arts and Sciences.
Calendar

Meetings and Workshops
English Department Meets: Thursday, Nov. 7 and Tuesday, Dec. 3 12:15-1:30 p.m. in Trustees Conference Room, Stahl 1290

UCC Meets: Thursdays, Nov. 14 and Dec. 5 12:15-1:30 in Kings Chapel Conference Room.

EPC Meetings: Tuesday, Nov. 19 12:15-1:30 and Thursday, Dec. 12 from 10-1 in Kings chapel Conference Room.

First-Year Writing Program Professional Development Workshop Thursday, Nov. 14 12:15-1:30 in 73 Tremont 10100.

Events
Nov. 7: Poetry reading and translations with Alissa Valles, 7-9 p.m. in the Poetry Center, 3rd floor Sawyer Library, 73 Tremont St.

Nov. 21 Grace Talusan, author of the memoir The Body Papers will read from her new memoir and conduct a writing workshop 12:15-1:45 in the Poetry Center.


Dec. 5th: Faculty Reading ft. José Araguz 4:30-6:30pm in the Poetry Center.

Dec. 12: Fall CAS Honors Symposium 12:15-1:30 in Sargent Hall.

Dec. 13: First-Year Writing Project Based Learning Pilot Research conference 1-3 p.m. in Sawyer 410 A & B

Letter from the Chair

Students say our kindness is what matters the most

In my last chair letter, I praised the many positive qualities of the English department. The first item I addressed: “Consider the English faculty’s commitment to teaching—in and out of the classroom.”

This time, the letter is devoted entirely to teaching. The English faculty certainly excel in many areas, including scholarship. Some faculty have won awards for their publications, some have published with the most prestigious presses in the world, and some have published in the field’s most elite journals. But our faculty’s defining feature, in my opinion, is our dedication to teaching and commitment to students.

To gather some information about your teaching, I reached out to students and alumni. I carefully constructed a list of questions for the purposes of conducting both a cross-sectional survey and a longitudinal survey. I then coded the data I received in order to run a linear regression analysis... Joking. I don’t even really know what that means. But I did send an e-mail to former students and alumni and asked them to share the first two or three words that came to mind to describe the teachers they’ve had in our department.

Some students focused on their teachers’ intellectual qualities (“intellectually curious,” “insatiable hunger for knowledge,” “open minded”). Some recognized their hard work (“dedicated,” “committed,” “driven,” “willing to go the extra mile even when they have work piling up themselves”). Others described them as “motivating” and “passionate.” It was clear from the responses, however, what quality students value most: empathy. Students wrote “kind,” they wrote “understanding,” and they wrote “compassionate.”

This didn’t surprise me in the least. I’ve seen our faculty’s kindness and compassion enacted in countless ways over the years. I’ve observed the time they spend with students during office hours discussing course material and personal issues. I’ve heard them call offices on campus to advocate on behalf of students. I’ve listened as they’ve shared genuine concern about students facing various hardships: health issues, family problems, financial stress.

As I was thinking about these everyday acts of kindness, I received an e-mail from a faculty member this weekend who explained why he was not able to attend an event on Friday: “I had three students wanting to stick around to conference with me about their papers. They were each struggling with some personal issues and I couldn't refuse and defer them to office hours on Monday.” His message captures an essence of our department.

Of course, I’m always happy to celebrate our impressive publications and our many accomplishments. But the qualities students admire most are the ones I admire most as well. Thank you, English faculty, for your kindness, compassion, and empathy, the not-so-secret secret that makes the English department such a special place for both students and faculty.
Q: Describe life since graduation.

SG: I thought about an MFA in Creative Writing, but I wasn’t writing enough to build a portfolio I was really proud of. For most of 2017, I held temporary roles through agencies that helped me gain more experience and skills in office settings. Later that year, I founded The Rina Collective, a personal growth and self care blog. It’s my greatest accomplishment thus far as a writer. With that and short-term jobs, I was still applying for permanent roles but had trouble finding a good fit. By the end of 2018, one of my friends sent me a link to GrubStreet, a creative writing non-profit in Downtown Boston. I’ve been working there for a little over a year now. My roles are Development Associate and Boston Writers of Color Group Coordinator. For Development, I communicate with donors, process gifts, and run GrubStreet’s membership program. The Boston Writers of Color Group, founded in 2016, is a platform (through a Facebook Group, Meetup Group, and a monthly newsletter) where self-identifying people of color can meet one another, find writing opportunities, and share writing events. I co-organize free monthly events like writing retreats, author visits, submit-a-thons, and MFA alumni panels. I’m so grateful that I’m able to do great work for writers in this city and beyond.

Q: How does your education help you in your current position?

SG: To work at GrubStreet, you have to be passionate about writing, and understand how important it is for everyone to find their voices. I wouldn’t be without the incredible professors I learned from. Rich Miller guided me as my advisor and encouraged me to take courses that would challenge me as both a reader and a writer. Bryan Trabold’s class on African Literature not only introduced me to incredible African writers, but it was crucial for me as an African-American woman to know the writers who come from the continent my ancestors are originally from. Quentin Miller introduced me to the beauty of African-American playwrights and the brilliant mind of James Baldwin. Leslie Eckel’s class on Dickinson and Whitman challenged me to analyze poetry, which I was once afraid to do. My experience interning for Jennifer Barber and Salamander gave me a glimpse publishing in a literary magazine. Amy Monticello’s Creative Nonfiction Workshop is one of the reasons I have a blog. I fell in love with writing personal essays after hearing others’ stories and then having the courage to share my own. All of these courses and experiences shaped me professionally to find the purpose of my voice and to champion others’.

Q: What advice do you have for current English majors as they consider life after graduation?

SG: Don’t allow anyone to project their fears onto you. Take your time. You can do so much in this major, and there are so many new careers in this generation that demand writers. I don’t care what your family and friends tell you; teaching is not the only thing you can do. Shadow alumni who were once English majors. If you love books, start writing reviews. If you love businesses and brands, learn how you can represent them on social media. If you want to write a memoir or novel, talk to our amazing professors who have published work. If you want to work in politics, find out where you can sign up for internships. If you want to help your community, research organizations that align with your interests. If you want people to read your work, create an account on Medium or start a blog. The biggest benefit you have as an English major is deciding on a career that speaks to your soul. Language does that for us.

"I don't care what your family and friends tell you; teaching is not the only thing you can do."

—Serina Gousby
Frangipane looks at lies that tell the truth

Sometimes a collection of lies can get you closer to the truth than you might expect. In his newly published book of criticism, Nick Frangipane analyzes novels that recount the same events in multiple ways. This isn’t a new thing in literature, but he has noticed contemporary authors using this strategy for different purposes than did the postmodern writers of the early Twentieth Century.

His work is titled Multiple Narratives, Versions and Truth in the Contemporary Novel, just published from Plagrave.

In it, his central concern is how authors use multiple tellings of the same events in order to make meaning, not to point out how meaning can never be made.

“I look at novels and stories that contain multiple versions of events,” he said. “I call these ‘reflexive double narratives.’ In these, I see the ways writers have moved from a Postmodern way of looking at things to a more Post-Postmodern way.”

He sees the distinction like this: “Postmodern writers often deployed multiple versions of the same story to remind us that stories are always faulty and contradictory. They work to undermine our faith in verisimilitude and emphasize how impossible it is to truly know anything or anyone.”

On the other hand, while reflexive double narratives do contain multiple versions of events, they also make clear why they’ve done this, insisting that meaning can be found and made despite the inevitable failings of memory and communication, that fictional stories can work to get us toward something truthful, and even factual.

They don’t explicitly reject postmodern ideas, but find new strategies to locate or create meaning within those limitations. You could say postmodernism focuses on what we can’t know and can’t have. The more recent trend Frangipane tracks focuses on what we can.

You can argue that much of that apocalyptic postmodern writing arises from an incomplete reading of existentialism, stopping at the meaningless, the dread, the confusion, the unknowability, the absurdity of existence without proceeding to the conclusion that even the earliest existentialist philosophers asserted: that within all those uncertainties and limitations, each of us still has a life to live, and we are each responsible for the meanings we make inside of it. It seems that contemporary writers working with reflexive double narratives are completing the circuits the earlier postmodernists left disconnected.

Frangipane compares Ian McEwan’s Atonement (2001) to John Fowles’s The French Lieutenant’s Woman (1969). He examines how Alice Munro has used this style of narration in her work for a long time, observing how her knowing use of false stories gets at, maybe not factual truth, but truths about character. He looks at how Doris Lessing’s fiction/nonfiction hybrid Alfred and Emily (2008) allows her to write what her parents’ lives might have been like had World War II not changed everything. In that imagining, some things are changed, but in staying true to their characters, their imagined characters end up unhappy for many of the same reasons their real life counterparts did. In the ways characters, narrators, or the writers themselves grapple with incomplete information and conflicting stories, Frangipane sees models for research his students can follow.

He uses one such novel both in this analysis and in his teaching. Laurent Binet’s 2010 novel HHhH (which is an abbreviation of what translates to “Himmler’s Brain is Called Heydrich) is the story of an assassination, but more it’s the story of how a writer cobbles together research about it, grappling with what he can’t know and embracing narrative as a mode of theoretical explanation, as a legitimate way to come to an understanding. Narrative, it asserts, may proceed similarly to science in that they both seek to account for the evidence at hand with plausible explanations.

This is the same sort of focus Frangipane’s Seminar for Freshmen course “What Is A Fact?” takes. There, he assigns students to write a personal narrative, then write an addendum to it explaining the things they had to leave out.

“That helps bring an awareness of the omissions and rhetorical framing every storyteller makes, and how they take an active role in shaping the truth,” he said. “In all my classes, I try to promote an awareness that authors make rhetorical choices that shape their reader’s understanding and their own.”
When you forget the artifice: 
Spare poetry rich in sentiment

Open José Araguz’s new poetry collection An Empty Pot’s Darkness and before you read any of the words, you’ll be struck by the sparseness of them. Each poem is made from eight lines alone on an otherwise blank page. They run in cycles, so whole sets of them get titles, but no individual poem gets a name. Even visually, the words get a lot of empty space to echo against.

You can call them descansos. You can do the math of the syllabics, as Araguz did to write them, but he doesn’t mention those things in the collection. The word “octaves” appears on the title page, and in three of the section titles (“Octaves of Youth” and “Octaves of Experience”, echoing William Blake, and “Octaves for O.”, one of the sets of elegies that comprise the book). The reason is that the form is there to enable a look at something else, not just to revel in itself.

“The book is not the classroom,” Araguz said. “Poetry already has to fight against a reputation of pretentiousness, of purposeless difficulty. I didn’t want readers to have to count on their fingers or to be unable to access these poems if they didn’t know a given form or poet or tradition. So, with the help of some friends, I took away a lot of that scaffolding and just asked ‘what is it important to know?’”

In these poems, we come to know an armchair, a desk made from an old door, an empty pasta pot. But like the forms, the objects matter less that the functions they serve, and here, they are containers for memory, for people.

Whether for people like Octavio Paz—known to Araguz only through poetic influence—or people like Dennis Flinn and Christine Maloy—whom Araguz knew personally—these poems are elegies, and grief runs thickly through them.

It’s not exactly the armchair that summons Flinn back, but the memory of the sound of its creaking when he sat in it. The door is more than door or desk because Flinn set this up in an unused room so Araguz could live there and write poems there during one of the most lonely and needful times of Araguz’s life.

In an essay published elsewhere, he wrote of another characterizing moment with Flinn. In those days, Araguz would set up to write inside an independent book store back in Corpus Christi, Texas. Flinn pounded on the window from the outside and yelled at the strangers passing by on the street, “Hey! Everybody look! This is a poet working! This is what a poet working looks like!”

As you might imagine of most poets, Araguz was mortified at being the focus of all that loud attention. But what happened here was like what happened when Flinn first got his hands on one of his poems and started marking it up and talking about it. He later realized that what Flinn was doing—the first time anybody had done that to his writing—was workshopbing, mentoring, sharing what he had of himself and his own poetry. Having grown up without a dad, this was especially meaningful and formative for him.

“He never wanted to stand in for a dad,” Araguz said. “But he still took a bit of that role. He was actually able to see me for the things I cared about.”

And in there, among slam poets and undomesticated writers in Corpus Christi, in the house with no electricity and the creaky armchair and the desk improvised from a door, Araguz acquired his foundations for what poetry is about, for what teaching can look like, for how an artistic community should work.

“Later,” he said, “going into the academic creative writing world, and running into so much of the opposite of what I’d known locally in Corpus Christi, it could feel pretty cutthroat and competitive and all about people’s egos. I thought ‘Where’s the generosity?’”

It felt like Flinn, a poet himself, was carrying him forward, as he’d carried others he knew and still others he’d only read. So when Flinn died, and when Christine Maloy (another Corpus Christi poet) died, and when others come into and out of your life and influence for other reasons, what is one to do but carry them forward in whatever way you can.
SF Profile

First-Year students get their "Revenge!"

As literary subjects go, revenge is one of the oldest. It’s also one Freshmen students can easily get on board with. Titled “Revenge!” Kaylin O’Dell’s Seminar for Freshmen course draws on literature from a wide time period across Early Modern and Modern eras, from William Shakespeare’s Hamlet to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter to Alan Moore’s V for Vendetta to The Princess Bride.

One student said she was drawn to the course theme because “I’m really petty.” But even she understood that there’s more to revenge than simply how delicious it can be. Whether they’re English majors or not, students signing up for this are interested in character, in motivations. A number of students in this class and in English courses more broadly are deeply interested or even also major in Psychology.

"They’re all interested in getting into the minds of characters,” O’Dell said. "And they get really frustrated when they can’t get inside a character’s mind. I really like working with revenge stories, because it gives us a unique way of thinking about how people interact."

One challenge for a First-year class is to find digestible bits of theory and context to incorporate. Reading Hamlet in context of Catholicism, its concepts of law, and Biblical concepts of justice may be new for them. Michel Foucault’s concepts of punishment may be daunting, and O’Dell is careful to break off small enough pieces of it to make it introductory. Still, this is all material for rich class discussions.

"We spend a lot of time in class debating concepts of revenge next to, say, concepts of justice,” O’Dell said. "Most students in this class said that justice in America was revenge, at least in practice, despite its ideals of equality. We discuss what happens with justice when you obsess over it, where it becomes linked to madness."

While other classes reading the same texts may be strict about close readings, O’Dell doesn’t mind lengthy talk of the themes in the SF course. It’s exactly the sort of place to get passionate about the things the Humanities have always been concerned with, to practice building claims from evidence, to practice using differences of opinion not as battles to be won, but as places to work together for deeper understanding.

ENG alum returns to class as guest speaker

Professor Leslie Eckel welcomed Suffolk English alum Serina Gousby (2016) to her ENG 217: American Literature I class on September 26, where she read her wonderful poem "Phillis" about following in Phillis Wheatley's footsteps through Boston. She then helped Eckel and her Faculty Assistant Nancy Pocoli (2019) lead students through a discussion of Wheatley's poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America."

ENG honors society taps new members

Suffolk’s chapter of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society induct new members during a ceremony in Spring 2019. From left: Madison Hindley, Alyssa D’Arcangelo, Melanthi Vasialidis, Chapter Advisor Professor Elif Armbuster, Kate Miano, Jackie Janussis, Sydni Masiello, and Matthew Shiels.
A brief interview with new full-time faculty: Barrett Bowlin

Q: What’s your educational background?

BB: For the longest time, I wanted to be a psychiatrist, which meant medical school, so I was pre-med for all four years of undergrad at the University of Arkansas. (I actually used to teach sections of the MCAT for Kaplan, for beer money.) But because I was also working at a psych hospital during my undergrad days, I got to see what psychiatry was like up close and personal, which wound up strangely turning me off from the field. But my undergrad major was English, which eventually turned into a Creative Writing specialization, and that was what I continued with during my master’s program (at Kansas State) and then my PhD (at Binghamton University). I was fortunate, as well, that both K-State and Binghamton had some outstanding Rhetoric and Composition programs, which I got waaaaaaay into during both stints.

Q: Where are you most recently coming from?

BB: Binghamton, New York, which is about a three-hour bus ride from NYC.

Q: Where are you originally coming from?

BB: I’m originally from Fayetteville, Arkansas, but to tell y’all the truth, I reckon I’ve managed to escape there without much of a southern accent.

Q: Did anybody come with you?

BB: Yup. My wife, Cari, and my two children, Sierra and Cormac, each of which I promise to bring to the next faculty party. They exist, I swear!

Q: What are your areas of interest and expertise?

BB: I consider myself a Creative Writer who’s able to apply writing pedagogies across the board, whether that’s in a First-Year Composition classroom, a STEM writing workshop, or a 1-on-1 Writing Center conference with a student. I also come from a Visual Culture background, which means I get really, really geeky about film, television, video games, and comics/graphic novels.

Q: Can you tell us anything about your philosophy of teaching First-Year Writing?

BB: One of the things I stress in my classrooms is connectivity between writing and application. I don’t just want students to write a paper; instead, I want them to understand how they can affect change through their writing. Building those connections between what they learn in the FYW classroom and how they can alter the exterior world is foundational for each of the genres I assign.

Q: Describe your own writing, and how your practice as a writer informs your teaching.

BB: I’m an essayist and short story writer, which are the two genres I publish in the most. As a result, a lot of my teaching centers around the use and importance of narrative, whether it’s as a rhetorical strategy or as a means of building trust between students. I’ve found that students tend to workshop best when they know stories about each other’s lives, and I encourage those moments of connectivity so they trust each other more when sharing their own writing with each other.

English Honors students show their academic work

Suffolk ENG Honors students after their Honors thesis presentations in April 2019. From left: Amanda Zarni, Mena Vollano, Matthew Shiels, Heba Munir, Anna Pravdica, Nancy Pocoli, Heather Marshall, and Joanna Rovin. Each student works with a faculty advisor to design, research, and write a single, thorough project, and present it at this event each Spring.
Conferences, awards, talks, teaching news, research, travel

José Angel Araguz has joined the faculty of Pine Manor College’s Solstice Low-Residency MFA Program where he will work closely with graduate students in poetry and creative nonfiction. At Solstice, students are in residence on campus for ten days, twice a year, for a total of five residencies over two years. He also read as part of the Writers for Migrant Justice benefit event on September 4th, 2019. The reading was held at the Arlington Street Church in Boston.

Elif Armbuster was accepted into a "Master Memoir" class at the Grub Street writing center in Boston which ran for 12 weeks over the summer, and she was accepted into the next phase of the course for this academic year. As part of the course, she has met with memoirists such as Alex Marzano-Lesnevich and Grace Talusan. This fall, she has taken students to see "SIX" at the A.R.T. about the six wives of Henry VIII and to the Harvard Bookstore to hear author Lori Harrison-Kahan (Boston College) speak about her latest book on feminist journalist Miriam Michelson. Elif will also host author Grace Talusan (The Body Papers, 2019) at Suffolk this November.

Wyatt Bonikowski presented a paper at the 15th International Gothic Association conference at Lewis University in Romeoville, IL, on August 2, 2019: "Hence, Asmod-eous": Feminine Demonic Writing in Shirley Jackson’s The Bird's Nest." It focused on Shirley Jackson’s use of allusions to demonology and witchcraft in her modern psychological novel of multiple personality disorder, arguing it represents the resistance of the feminine subject to patriarchal notions of the self and mental health. It’s part of an essay-in-progress for a forthcoming edited collection on Shirley Jackson.

Leslie Eckel is teaching a new course on Immigrant Stories this fall, which included a field trip to the North End and a guest speaker from the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, who spoke about getting involved with pro-immigration initiatives in the state.

Hannah Hudson gave a talk this summer, “Botany Bay, British Colonialism, and the Form of the Eighteenth-Century Magazine,” at the International Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing titled “Indigeneity, Nationhood, & Migrations of the Book,” held in Amherst, MA, July 2019. She is looking forward to giving another this November, titled “Reviewing Before Genre: Gendered Reception, the Gothic, and The Public Good” at the Aphra Behn and Frances Burney Societies Conference, at Auburn University, AL.

Peter Jeffrey delivered a seminar class at the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation’s International Cavafy Summer School in Athens which had as its theme “Cavafy’s Orientations.” The three-hour seminar was titled “Cavafy’s Levant: Commerce, Culture and Mimicry in the Early Life of the Poet.” It will be published in a forthcoming issue of boundary 2, an international journal of literature and culture (Duke University Press). He was featured in an extensive interview in the Athenian magazine LiFo that discussed his seminar presentation, his current biographical project of the life of the poet, and the recently digitized Cavafy archive: https://www.lifo.gr

George Kalogeris will read from his poetry collection Guide to Greece for the Modern Greek Studies Department at Harvard University on October 31.

Jon Lee has been named a faculty member at Wellspring, a 3-day poetry conference for high school students in Hocking County, OH.


Amy Monticello led a Master’s Class and contributed to other events at the Meacham Writers’ Workshop at Chattanooga State Community College in Tennessee in October.


Chris Siteman (Part X of ME, Pen and Anvil Press 2019) read with Mitch Manning (City of Water, Arrowsmith Press 2019) and Beth Woodcome Platow (Little Myths, National Poetry Review Press 2017) at the Alumni Poetry Reading in the Poetry Center in April. Watch it at: https://suensemble.suffolk.edu/Watch/Jt27HgWm.

Da Zheng was invited to be a keynote speaker at the symposium on Chiang Yee at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in June, and gave a speech at the official Blue Plaque ceremony later.
Scholarly, Creative, and Professional Publications

JOSE ANGEL ARAGUZ

ELIF ARMBRUSTER
Essays: "'More Than Grassy Hills:' Land, Space, and Female Identity in the Works of Laura Ingalls Wilder and Willa Cather," appeared in Reconsidering Laura Ingalls Wilder: Little House and Beyond, University Press of Mississippi June, 2019. This essay draws connections between the contemporaneous authors and underscores similarities between their female heroines with respect to how they relate the land of the Great Plains. "Dwelling in American Realism," published in the Oxford Handbook of American Literary Realism, Oxford UP, September, 2019, considers the houses and environments in post-Civil War American literature and emphasizes the overlapping material concerns of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s later work such as Pink and White Tyranny (1871) and Edith Wharton’s earlier work such as The House of Mirth (1905). Elif also has an essay on Wilder forthcoming in Gendered Ecologies: New Materialist Interpretations of Women Writers in the Long Nineteenth Century (Oxford UP, November 2019) entitled: “Ants Become Giants: The Pioneering Perspective of Laura Ingalls Wilder," which examines Wilder's relationship to the land of the midwest and its function as materially empowering for women in the early 20th century. For an essay in Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers (vol. 36 no. 1), she reviewed three recent works on Laura Ingalls Wilder: Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder, by Caroline Fraser, Libertarians on the Prairie: Laura Ingalls Wilder, Rose Wilder Lane, and the Making of the Little House Books by Christine Woodside, and The World of Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Frontier Landscapes That Inspired the Little House Books by Marta McDowell.

WYATT BONIKOWSKI
Flash fiction: "Nightmare Bird" in the online journal Coffin Bell, Issue 2.2, in April 2019: https://coffinbell.com/volume-2-issue-no-2/

LESLIE ECKEL

HANNAH HUDSON

PETER JEFFREYS
Narrative poem “Solos” in the journal Mediterranean Poetry. The poem is about a family estate in Greece and the history and nostalgia surrounding its loss. https://www.odyssey.pm/contributors/peter-jeffreys/

JON LEE

QUENTIN MILLER
Book: James Baldwin in Context, Cambridge University Press, 2019 (edited collection, including the introduction (1-4) and three essays by the author: "American Writers in Paris" (17-28); "Biographies" (171-187); and "Baldwin and the Rhetoric of Confession" (289-304).

SALAMANDER: Gary White’s translation of Parmenides’ “Listen” from Salamander #48 will be featured on Poetry Daily on November 7th, 2019.

MAREN SHIFFER

DA ZHENG
Essay: “A Peking Opera, English Play, and Hong Kong Film” is to appear in Film Int 17:3 (September 2019). He has also contributed a revised “Foreword” to the new edition of The Silent Traveller in Edinburgh by Chiang Yee.
This semester, Suffolk University’s First-Year Writing Program is testing something new. Five professors are piloting redesigned sections of WRI 101 built around concepts and pedagogies of Project-Based Learning.

Across five different course themes, students are working in small teams to take the rhetorical concepts that are foundational to all of our FYW courses and apply them in some multimodal writing project of their design that also addresses a locally-observable problem and how we talk about it. Student groups will display their final projects at a conference here at Suffolk in December.

This is conceptually aligned with the work already happening in all of our FYW courses, but the activities look a bit different. Faculty are gathering data throughout this pilot program, and will use those findings in discussions on updating the mainstream curriculum in the coming years.

These faculty attended workshops over the summer both with Suffolk’s Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence, and another hosted by the Creativity and Innovation program in which they received strategies and materials developed at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, which has built its entire campus pedagogy around project-based learning over the last several decades.

Okay. This all sounds like a major overhaul, and in ways it can be, but there are elements to steal and use in other classes. For example, best practices in PBL pedagogy build a lot of formal infrastructure into student group work. Rather than self-selecting or being placed randomly with peers, students complete a confidential survey of their interests, strengths, weaknesses, schedules of availability, names of students they may very much not want to work with, etc. With that information, faculty can build groups deliberately, and hopefully more harmoniously, than leaving it all to chance.

Another stealable thing for any class is the team equity charter. Following example templates, students draft their own constitution to set their procedures, their expectations, their definitions on quality and quantity of work, how to manage deadlines, the plans to address conflict, etc. They’re carefully brought around to the idea that conflict is a key part of the success of group work, rather than a sign of failure. Having such preparation for students to rely on as they work is so far proven valuable and effective at mitigating the common negative aspects of group work.

These and other PBL teaching materials are or will soon be posted on our department’s First-Year Writing Resources Blackboard page. See also the book WPI produced: Project-Based Learning in the First Year, edited by Kristin Wobbe and Elisabeth Stoddard.
In the Spring, several ENG faculty formed a "Learning Circle" through Suffolk's Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence to discuss the teacher and writer John Warner's book *Why They Can't Write*, and the pedagogical concerns it raises.

Mostly, these concerns were very familiar to those who teach college-level writing. One so key that it made it into the book's subtitle is the reliance on the five paragraph form for far longer into high school student's lives than is healthy (perhaps it would be wise to stop it by the fifth grade), which leaves them with detrimental relationships to information, to argument, to sources and research, to the work of writing, and to themselves as both readers and writers. Warner contends, and Suffolk FYW faculty agree that this removes student agency from writing, and encourages them to write in a mostly pleasant-sounding form, rather than building forms and interpretations from the evidence they gather themselves. It is a form particularly pleasing to standardized tests, and Warner argues this is a large reason why we still live with it. As a consequence, though, students get so caught up "backing up their claims" that they ignore any evidence that might complicate their claims. And so our first work in FYW courses is to un-teach all of that. All of our FYW textbooks support this effort to move students away from the five-paragraph form. *Writing Analytically* does so very explicitly.

Here, the book was a bit like preaching to the choir, it is an excellent text to hand to outsiders who might not understand what we do, and what problematic writing instruction current incoming students are carrying with them.

Learning circle discusses book, writing pedagogy

Two ENG alums share graduate school news

George Kalogeris shared two recent emails from former students:

Hi Professor Kalogeris,

I wanted to thank you once again for what you did for me during my time at Suffolk. I recently got accepted into my top choice law school, Santa Clara Law, and was reflecting on our time together. You showed a kid that loved mythology how deep and beautiful that medium could be. You’re classes inspired not only myself but my peers to explore these myths and their meanings while simultaneously seeing some of ourselves in these stories. Being with you for poetry and mythology continuously sparked my interest in the written word. And even though I’m pursuing a different career I will never stop the pursuit of mythology and poetry. Again I hope you’re doing great and I can’t thank you enough for the guidance you gave me during my time as a student.

Sincerely,
Remy Fujioka

Dear Professor Kalogeris,

I just found out that I got into the Harvard School of Education and was waitlisted at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and at MIT. I am still mulling over all the options, but I wanted to let you know. Thank you again for writing letters of recommendation for me. You have been tremendously helpful in this process, and I cannot thank you enough.

Best regards,
Betsy Willett

Faculty: use our Blackboard page to find and share materials for your FYW classes

All ENG faculty have access to our department’s First-Year Writing Resources Blackboard page. There, you'll find sample syllabi, assignment prompts, teaching materials, and a massive library of course readings, images, podcasts, videos, and more that are all built to support a wide range of course themes, all rooted in the concepts of rhetoric that unify all the courses in our FYW program. You can also find pedagogy articles and strategies that are useful in FYW courses and in upper-level courses. One thing we need more of, though, is sample student writing. On the announcements page of FYW Resources, you'll find instructions for getting student permissions and handling their work. Please keep an eye out for strong student samples, and any other exercises or lessons you’ve developed that you’d be willing to share. Email jwtucker@suffolk.edu.
Welcome back, Professor Rich Miller!

Professor Rich Miller was voted "Most Outstanding CAS Faculty Member by Suffolk’s Student Government Association in the Spring. This summer, he faced some health issues and doctor’s orders that kept him home for about the first six weeks of the Fall semester. If you’ve known him for any length of time, you know his outstanding teaching and his fondness for both unicorns and friendly (but temporary) office vandalism. English Chair Bryan Trabold crowdsourced some kind words from the rest of the English faculty, added both printed and inflatable unicorns, so Rich returned to find the whole display surrounding his office door. Appropriately, the term "non sequitur" appeared, in kind ways, more than once.

SF profile
Reading and writing, but it's with pictures

Among the terms commonly used, there’s no good name for this literary form. “Graphic novel” means something long, narrative, and fictional, when this form includes short memoir, commentary, and journalism. “Comic” and “cartoon” suggest something funny or aimed at children, and much of it is neither. “Manga” is a distinct Japanese style of the form. Maybe we could call it “graphic prose,” but that leaves out poetry. It trades in some combination of sequential still images and written words. Let’s keep in mind all those inaccurate synonyms, but agree to call it “graphic writing.” Tell the others.

Wyatt Bonikowski’s Seminar for Freshmen course “Heroes, Anti-heroes, and Outsiders: Reading Graphic Novels” has been a popular choice for students over the last eleven years he’s been teaching it. Using concepts from Scott McCloud’s popular textbook Understanding Comics, and generative prompts from writers like Linda Barry and Brian Kiteley, students both analyze existing works of graphic writing and, as part of a final project, create their own.

Unsurprisingly, the new challenge involves learning how to read the visual images analytically. While the underlying rhetorical and literary theories are the same, as with written prose, the different tools of creation make for different possibilities, requiring different ways of reading, different ways of noticing the creator’s tools at work and inducing from those the implicit ideas the texts were built upon. “We’re used to talking about showing versus telling,” Bonikowski said. “But here, two types of showing are possible.”

After much study, writing exercises, and a field trip to the Museum of Fine Arts to practice adding text to images there (they treat one painting as the first panel in a sequence, then add two more), students end the class by making their own four-page work of graphic writing, which the class has printed and bound. Every student gets a copy.

To allay the fears these students often have over their artistic ability, Bonikowski assures them he won’t be grading them on their drawing skills. Even the simplest visuals can be deployed to powerful effect. Though he doesn’t work in this form himself, and came to it as a teacher out of his own curiosity, rather than through earlier training, Bonikowski does work on both sides of the page as a scholar and a short fiction writer. In his literature courses, he asks students to write some original work or to model that of another author. He sees benefits to student’s analytical abilities when they can practice being writers themselves, so they can think like writers, focused on rhetorical choices and their effects. And if they never write or read another work of graphic writing again, those are the things they can carry with them wherever they go.