Authors Bring Imaginations & Talent to LitFest

The Department of English was pleased to host another exciting and successful LitFest, the weekend of April 5 and 6. The theme, “Crossing Boundaries, Crossing Frontiers,” was highlighted by diverse, renowned speakers, writers, and poets who were invited to share their remarkable talents.

To jumpstart the event, poetry readings engaged listeners on Friday evening. Students, faculty, and staff listened to poets Ruth Ellen Kocher and David Dominguez. Kocher, an MFA professor at the University of Colorado-Boulder, is an award winning poet and essayist whose work has appeared in numerous journals. Her most recent work, One Girl Babylon (2013), has been highly praised. Reviewer Bruce Weigl wrote, “At the heart of these stunning poems is a precise and imaginative examination of the thin line that separates beauty and terror, wisdom and madness, tolerance and hatred.” Kocher illuminated her brilliance in the Dayton community through her poetry readings. She even shared her excitement by tweeting this event.

Dominguez’s work has been published in several anthologies in addition to his own volume titled Work Done Right. His writing examines the hard work of individuals, his Mexican descent, and his home in Central California. In addition to writing, Dominguez teaches composition, literature, and poetry writing at Reedley College in California.

Two additional authors presented their work at Art-Street Saturday evening. Roxanne Gay’s vibrant readings of her published work from Best American Short Stories, Best American Erotica, and her book, Ayiti, inspired her audience. Her book has been called “a unique blend of fiction, nonfiction and poetry, all interwoven to represent the Haitian diaspora experience.”

The weekend of speakers ended with the 2011-2012 Poet Laureate for the San Antonio Poets’ Association, Juan Manuel Perez. His poetry includes topics on Mexican culture, history, horror, science fiction, and comic books. Perez is the author of six poetry chapbooks. In addition to his prolific writing, he is a high school history teacher.

—Read more about LitFest! See page 4
A Word from the Chair

Our May graduates have now gone on to new adventures, and those of us left on campus have a moment, at last, to catch our breaths after an incredibly busy year. One of our major projects in the past year has been an intense effort to revise the curriculum for the undergraduate English major. This work has been the focus of our thrice-yearly retreats, plus regular department and working group meetings, for at least the past two years, and we are now nearing completion of a finished proposal. After much study, deliberation, consultation, and reflection, we have come up with a new curricular structure that we believe will not only allow us to continue serving our traditional recruits well but also help us attract a new generation of students to the major. The three tracks we’ve designed — literature, teaching, and writing — speak to the growing range of expertise among our faculty as well as to the changing scope of English studies as a discipline. We remain committed to offering a common core of courses and experiences for all English majors, while also helping students to identify and pursue their more particular interests and passions as they progress through the program. We are also looking forward to offering more opportunities for advanced research in the major and to implementing a new capstone writing seminar that would be linked to individual research projects. The new major, in keeping with the new Common Academic Program that UD will begin phasing in this fall to replace General Education, will also be more deliberately developmental in focus: the mix of required and elective courses is being designed to build upon students’ growing knowledge and skills over time. And we aim to help students explore more deliberately the various professional and academic opportunities that await them beyond the B.A. We know, from our wonderful alumni, what rich possibilities lie out there for our graduates, but students don’t always perceive these themselves. The e-mails our alums send us are one way we gather this information and share it through this newsletter, so please keep sending those messages to English@udayton.edu! We’re also inviting our alumni to participate in a short on-line survey about their experiences in and after the English major — to help us both evaluate and promote our changing curriculum. If you are a UD English graduate, please take a few minutes to respond to our survey questions at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/UDEnglishAlum2013. Thanks & cheers!

Class Publishes Irish Fairytales

Dr. Peggy Strain’s section of English 333, Images of Women, is titled “Ireland’s Women and Her Writers,” and last spring she had students write their own Irish fairytales. First, students became familiar with the role of storytelling in Irish culture and history. After considering the differences between myths, fairytales, and legends, students used these criteria to compose their own stories.

“I began teaching this class in Dublin with summer study abroad,” Dr. Strain said. “I created the fairytales assignment then, and students read fairytales at the final dinner as entertainment.” Now, she has expanded the assignment so that the fairytales will be bound and distributed so that each student has a copy of everyone’s tales. Dr. Strain noted that “one of the students has a roommate who offered to design the cover, and I like the fact that a student is designing the cover too.”

Some fairytales are dark, some are spin-offs of stories previously read in class, and others are set in contemporary times. Not all are set in Ireland, and some tales even include illustrations. The main goal of the assignment was to “make a connection between the women and the writing, then and now. The students are becoming Irish writers themselves.”

A copy of The Irish Fairytales of ENG 333 will be available in the English department office.
New English Major Tracks

The English department is making plans to implement a new track-based major. The change was prompted by a department-wide response to the changing field of English as well as a desire to equip each student to achieve excellence in five major areas: reading, writing, history, scholarship, and diversity. English students will choose between one of three tracks — teaching, writing and literature.

The teaching track is designed to complement students in the dual-degree program with teacher education programs. The writing track will have three concentrations: creative writing, rhetoric and composition, and professional and technical writing. The literature track is most similar to the current English major, though it provides more flexibility and new course options.

Dr. Sheila Hassell Hughes, department chair, expressed her enthusiasm for the change: “We believe English majors will appreciate the opportunity to take more courses in their particular areas of interest, while also earning a solid grounding in the skills and knowledge traditional to the discipline.”

The new plan for the track-based major is not yet finalized, but could be implemented as early as fall 2014. The department will surely keep English majors posted on the progress of this exciting new endeavor.

Sigma Tau Delta Internship Panel

UD’s chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English Honors society, presented a panel last spring for fellow English majors to learn about internship opportunities and experiences. The panel consisted of Alyssa Marynowski, Alyssa Smith, Kristina DeMichele, and Anna Demmitt.

Alyssa Marynowski described her experience editing reports for Fire and Explosion Consultants, LLC. Alyssa Smith interned as editor and writer for Deaf-and-Hard-of-Hearing.com. Kristina DeMichele completed two internships: one as the Editorial Intern at University of Dayton Publishing in Madrid, Spain, and the other as the Editorial Intern for Entangled Publishing. Anna Demmitt interned with the Dayton Literary Peace Prize designing brochures and compiling data.

The panel engaged in discussion with the attendees about the opportunities for internships available at UD including LinkedIn, Career Services, Hire a Flyer, and faculty contacts. Sigma Tau Delta Delta plans to host an internship panel for English majors every year with fellow students.

Several years ago, UD English alum Tricia Barger spoke about her work in the Center for International Programs at an English major career panel organized by Mark Sisson, then the Associate Director of Career Services. English and education major Megan Klebba, Sigma Tau Delta president at the time, attended that event, and her interest in this career possibility was peaked. Megan graduated in May and is starting a M.A. program in Higher Education Administration at Vanderbilt.

Student News

Congratulations to first-year English majors Rachel Cain, Veronica Colborn, and Dominic Sanfilippo, who were among 16 first-year students selected as Chaminade Scholars. These students have an average 3.9/4.0 GPA and have demonstrated an intellectual curiosity that prompts them to explore the question of vocation and the relationship of faith and reason.

English major Jill Pajka (a joint B.F.A.) had an internship in Dublin, Ireland, for the summer as an editorial/production intern with Gill and Macmillan Publishing.

Kristina DeMichele (’13) has been accepted to the graduate school at Emerson in Boston.

Mark Lenz (’13) is graduated with a dual degree in teacher education and will be teaching English in Thailand this year.

“I became a pilot because I wanted a view of the world. I chose the English degree because I also wanted the capacity to understand what I was seeing.” — Kevin O’Mahoney, B.A. English ’91
LitFest Workshops

Every two years, the University of Dayton impresses the local community with LitFest, the Department of English’s celebration of literature. Late year was no exception. On April 5-6, Associate Professor and director of LitFest Albino Carrillo coordinated the event to allow the UD and Dayton communities to come together and celebrate diverse and accessible poetry. One way they celebrated was through conducting and participating in writing workshops.

Workshops were administered by poets and scholars from Dayton and other regions. Members of the Dayton community, UD students, and local high school students all participated. The sessions covered topics like fiction, poetry, screenwriting, young adult fiction, performance or “slam” poetry, ekphrastic poetry, figurative language, and writing from memory. In any given workshop, one would encounter reading, listening to and watching examples, and participating in writing exercises. After the workshops were concluded, participants mingled with the poets over lunch. At the end of the day, participants were invited to share their works of art by reading something they had written during the workshop at the open mic.

Seventy-four high school students attended the workshops. The high schools from which these students came included Stivers School for the Arts, DECA (The Dayton Early College Academy), Oakwood High School, Fairmont High School, and The Miami Valley School. One teacher from Stivers described the high school students as “wide-eyed” and intrigued at such a different atmosphere from their routine environment. She thought that it was good for the kids to be exposed to a college campus. Students at Stivers were individually invited by their teachers to attend the writing workshops. “It was interesting. I’ve never been exposed to something like that before” is what one participant, a Stivers freshman, said of a writing technique with postcards, which the fiction workshop employed. Workshop conductors used many different tactics and exercises in order to implement beneficial writing strategies into the students’ repertoires.

Prof. Carrillo said the workshops and readings at LitFest were a great success overall and helpful to the high school students because “each writer had something different to offer.”
Department Events & News

Writing Course, Scholarship Focus on Heavy Metal

"Hell Bent for Leather: Heavy Metal Music, Globalization, and Popular Culture" is the title of a first-year composition honors course (ENG 200H) that uses Metal music as the lens through which students become better readers, writers, and critical thinkers. Instructor Dr. Bryan Bardine, Associate Professor, says, “The course is designed so that students write a ton, discuss Metal music, culture, and their role in our globalized society. First and foremost,” he explains, ‘the students' job is to become better writers, but they do that by examining scholarship on Metal, listening to and analyzing Metal music, viewing documentary films by scholars about Metal, and writing about it nearly every class.”

Heavy Metal music is a genre usually labeled as music for "outsiders" — for those people who don't fit in with the crowd, or for that matter don't really care that they don't. Dr. Bardine explains that over the years, Metal has been gaining a global presence, becoming much broader than the usual hot spots like Britain, mainland Europe, and the U.S. to include scenes developing in Africa, the Middle East, Far East, and even in places like Micronesia and Easter Island.

Last November, Dr. Bardine, with cooperation from more than a dozen university departments, hosted a symposium on Heavy Metal and Globalization. Noted Metal scholars Jeremy Wallach, Mark LeVine, Deena Weinstein, and Esther Clinton gave presentations to the approximately 125 attendees. After the symposium, LeVine, a well-respected guitarist, led a guitar master class with about ten UD students and faculty. Over the course of the evening the group wrote and performed their own instrumental Metal song.

Dr. Bardine explains that there are many reasons for the growth in Metal music and culture. One common reason is that people get involved with the music because it is a way to respond to the oppression that they feel from their government or the leaders that their country is controlled by. “Metal music is freedom — It's a way people can express themselves in a positive way so that they won't do so in a negative way,” he says.

Dr. Bardine is currently working on a book with fellow Metal scholar Dr. Mika Elovaara. The book, Unity in Disparity: Cultural Connections on Metal, examines Metal's changing roles in a global society. Metal experts from across the globe sent in chapter proposals for the book, and nine articles were chosen in addition to Dr. Bardine's and Dr. Elovaara's. Dr. Bardine’s contribution will focus on his Heavy Metal composition class.

Faculty & TA Happenings

Dr. Meredith Doench recently published two works of fiction. "How to Earn Your Wings" appeared in the Gertrude Literary Journal, Issue 19, 2013, and "Tuesday After Lunch" appeared in the American Antheneum Literary Journal: The Understanders Issue, 2013. Dr. Doench also conducted a reading of her story “Wetlands” at the Midwest Modern Language Association 2012 conference in Cincinnati in November as part of a creative writing prose panel of work focused on the topic of debt and loss.

Prof. Yvonne Teems-Stephens gave a presentation entitled “Seniors' Uses of Literate Practices to Manage the Aging Body” at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Las Vegas in March.

The teaching assistants who graduate in 2013 have great plans ahead. Luke Bowman has been awarded a Fulbright Teaching Assistantship in Austria for this year. Brennan Burk and Joseph Craig are teaching at the Community College level. Katie Ciani is returning to Texas and plans to complete her teaching certification in the Lone Star State. Marquette University offered Justice Hagan a spot in their Ph.D. program. Katie Robisch heads to Kent State to pursue a Ph.D. in their Literacy, Rhetoric, and Social Practice program. Emily Waters moved to Dallas to teach for the Institute for Reading Development in the summer and plans to complete her certification to teach primary or secondary education. Henry Yukevich is continuing his education at Indiana University Purdue, working on his Ph.D. At the time of this printing, Rasheedah Alexander is a Ph.D. candidate at George Mason. Congratulations to all of you for completing the Masters of Arts program.
Faculty Intercultural Global Study Travel Program

The Faculty Intercultural Global Study Travel Program is further globalizing two members of the English department. Dr. Andrew Slade, Assistant Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, traveled to Beijing, China last year. Dr. Tereza M. Szeghi, Assistant Professor, traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Peru in May 2013.

Dr. Slade is no newcomer when it comes to traveling abroad. He spent his second undergraduate year in France and spent two years of graduate school in Belgium. Considering that he has spent longer in Dayton than any other place, the answer was a no-brainer for him when he was offered the opportunity to spend time in China. From Beijing to Nanjing to Shanghai after a year-long seminar, Dr. Slade voyaged all over China for about three weeks to get the full experience of the culture. He participated in the Center for International Programs Faculty Exchange to better understand internalization. These experiences have helped him with teaching an intercultural LLC English 100 course.

Still looking ahead to her travels, Dr. Szeghi said, "This is an incredible opportunity for me to extend the scope of my research (which has looked at indigenous literature and activism in the United States, Mexico, parts of Central America, and Chile) to a new and critically related context." Prior to her trip, she learned a great deal about the cultural identities and human rights of people in Argentina and Peru from monthly seminar meetings with the program’s cohort of faculty and from her own research. Dr. Szeghi’s travel experiences promise to produce new areas of inquiry in classes that she will teach, and she anticipates assigning more South American writers and addressing issues particular to Argentina and Peru.

Department Pilots Crossing Boundaries Courses

In spring 2013, UD students began taking Crossing Boundaries courses, including integrative or interdisciplinary courses and inquiry courses that introduce non-majors to the methods of a discipline. These courses will ultimately serve the new CAP (Common Academic Curriculum) curriculum that will be phased in to replace general education. The English department piloted several such courses during the 2012-2013 school year to produce curricula that poises students for real-world applications of the English discipline. Dr. John McCombe’s course, “Reading MTV,” allows his students to explore the significance of MTV to 20th century American culture through the lens of communications, media history, and gender studies scholarship.

Other English professors answered the call for new Crossing Boundaries courses by teaming up with professors from disciplines other than English to co-design or co-teach. For example, the pilot “Perspectives on Childhood” is co-taught by the English department’s Dr. Kara Getrost and sociology’s Dr. Jeanne Holcomb. This course examines children’s social issues such as race, gender, poverty and homelessness, ability, chronic illness, bullying, and popularity. Sociology articles are paired with books from children’s literature such as “Harriet the Spy” to enable students to consider how these issues impact and are perceived by children.

Dr. Jennifer Haan co-designed her course “TESOL Methods for Teaching English Language Learners” with education’s Dr. Connie Bowman. According to Dr. Haan, the students in the class come from diverse backgrounds, so they are able to experience what it’s like to be students in an intercultural classroom as well as to teach in one.

Dr. Andrew Slade developed his English class, “Ladies, Knights and Lovers,” as an inquiry course with a psychoanalytic framework that addresses the experience of mad love and the ethics of the courtly love affair. “Literature matters. Stories matter,” Dr. Slade said. “If I can link a literary text to a real experience and show how a text gets us to a heart of that experience, anyone with any sensitivity can see how a story makes a difference.” In this way, the Crossing Boundaries Courses are making English accessible to students who never got in touch with their inner bookworm.
Alumni Spotlight: Jen Violi

Jen Violi (B.A., 1996, in English and communications, theatre concentration and M.A., 1999, in theological studies) has always had a passion for writing and storytelling, and last summer she reached a remarkable milestone in her publishing career with her first novel, Putting Makeup on Dead People. This, however, is not all she has been up to.

Jen says that “Over the last 20 years, I’ve created and facilitated hundreds of retreats, workshops, and experiences for people seeking to know themselves, their own journeys, and their creative potential on a deeper level.” In 2009 she moved from Dayton to Portland, Oregon, and began her own business, which offers writing coaching, manuscript critiques, workshops, and classes.

As a student at UD, Jen was the president of Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society. She attributes much of her current success to her UD professors: “Having these wise and witty humans as mentors and simply as people rooting for me has helped me enormously in terms of confidence, perseverance, and heart.”

Putting Makeup on Dead People exudes Jen’s desire to help others. In writing the novel, she intended for her words to heal her audience, just as other authors’ words have healed her throughout her lifetime.

Jen doesn’t plan to slow down anytime soon. For her future, Jen says she sees herself “writing more books, working with more writers who want to unleash their own stories, opening a writing retreat center on the Oregon coast, and living with as much heart and soul as possible.” Jen offers a free monthly e-mail newsletter, available for subscription on the homepage of her website, www.jenvioli.com.

Alumni Updates

Mary DeBauche (*90) writes that she chose to be an English major because she wanted to learn how to write on all levels, not specifically for journalism, public relations, or any other specialty, and that planning has paid off. After graduating she spent time writing collateral materials for a university fundraising campaign, working for an advertising agency, and doing freelance writing for small business clients. After having children, she returned to work to run a men’s soccer league in Houston, Texas, working with people from more than 73 countries. In 2012, she joined the non-profit organization Cypress ECG Project, which works with schools to ensure the heart health of student athletes and to help prevent Sudden Cardiac Death. In her position running this non-profit, she’s involved in redeveloping collateral materials, medical journal articles, social media campaigns, their website, and their business plan.

Susan Fox Larson (*80) first took a job following graduation teaching English composition, business writing, and public speaking at a junior college. Next, she went into sales, including work for an AM/FM radio station. Her work in radio eventually led her to work as the station’s on-air theatre critic. She later worked as a vice president of sales in Connecticut and New York, eventually taking a position as a senior vice president of business development for an international bank in Chicago. Currently, Susan works in development for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

Meghan McDevitt (*10) is working as an editorial assistant for GIE: Gastrointestinal Endoscopy, the official publication of the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) based in Oak Brook, Illinois. In addition, she is an associate editor and writer for the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors’ (ISMTE) monthly newsletter.

Kevin O’Mahoney (*91) pursued a career in aviation after graduating and became a pilot with Delta Air Lines. Today, he serves as a first officer on the Boeing 757 and 767, flying to a broad mix of domestic and international destinations.

Bill Wygand (*70) retired after a career that included jobs in quality control, industrial engineering, energy management, manufacturing, technical service, sales, and business development. His name is even listed as an inventor on a few patents.
Peter ("Pete") Swet’s (’63) play “The Interview” received wonderful reviews and was included in Chilton’s *Best Short Plays of 1975*. For his work in television, he received the Writers Guild Award and three Emmy nominations. His work has included a comedy for Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara, several miniseries for Showtime, and a made-for-TV movie. He also worked for three years on Sesame Street and worked on several cable programs and soap operas. As a journalist, Pete has written articles that appeared in *Parade, We, Men’s Health, and Modern Maturity*. Articles spanned a variety of genres, including essays, interviews, and cover profiles of Jay Leno, Billy Joel, Joan Rivers, Charlie Sheen, Ben Stiller, and Lorraine Bracco. His work has been widely honored, including receiving the Westhampton Writers Festival Award. His book *Cracking Up: Nice Day for a Brain Hemorrhage*, received the Gaylord Medal "For Finding the Ability in Disability.” The book tells, in humorous terms, the personal story of what is called a "Young Stroke."

### What We’re Reading

*Blue Nights* by Joan Didion – Nicky Adams
*Dear American Airlines* by Jonathan Miles – Ann Biswas
*The Best of Europe* by Rick Steves – Luke Bowman
*Cosmopolis* by Don Delillo – Brennan Burks
*Sugar in the Blood* by Andrea Stuart – Miriamne Krummel
*Jacob’s Folly* by Rebecca Miller – Miriamne Krummel
*A Discovery of Witches* by Deborah Harkness – Liz Mackay
*Double Fudge* by Judy Blume – John McCombe
*The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* by Avivah Gottlieb Zornber – Lori Phillips-Young
*Diana at Her Bath* by Pierre Klossowski – Andy Slade
*The Writing Life* by Annie Dillard – Andy Slade
*When One has Lived a Long Time Alone* by Galway Kinnell – Andy Slade
*Night* by Elie Wiesel – Yvonne Teems-Stephens
*The American Heiress* by Daisy Goodwin – Laura Vorachek
*Kim* by Rudyard Kipling – Laura Vorachek
*Street Player* by Danny Seraphine – Emily Walters

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Sincere thanks to the following individuals who have designated financial gifts to the University in support of the English Department.

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