

English News

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Messiah College English Department

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Department News

Finals Study Break

On Sunday December 5th—the Eve of Finals—Sigma Tau Delta is sponsoring a study break for all English majors. Come to the Writing Center on the first floor in Hoffman between 8 and 9 PM for food, fun, and most importantly a break from your books. We hope to see you there!

The Minneminggo Review

The Fall 2004 edition of the Minneminggo Review, a collection of Messiah students' original poetry, prose, non-fiction, and criticism, will be released this January. More information about this event

Spring Readings

On March 31 at 7:30, Poet Julia Kasdorf will be giving a reading at Messiah College. Kasdorf's recent work includes *Eve's Striptease* (1998), *The Body and the Book: Writing from a Mennonite Life, 1991-1999* (2001), and *Fixing Tradition: Joseph W. Yoder, Amish American* (2003). Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Paris Review*, *Poetry*, and several anthologies.

Matthew Roth, Professor of English at Messiah College, will also be giving a reading this spring, date to be announced. Dr. Roth's poems have appeared in many journals, including *Fence*, *Verse*, and *Antioch Review*.

Faculty News

Samuel Smith presented a poetry reading for the Mideast Conference on Christianity and Literature at the University of Dayton (Ohio) on October 23. The Scottish poetry journal *Spume* recently published three of his poems: "Today," "Three Kisses for Judas," and "Death by Religion."

Helen Walker presented a session at National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in Indianapolis on November 23rd on "Sensitizing the All-white Writing Classroom to the Global Village."

Larry M. Lake had a book review published in the current issue of *Pacific Affairs: An International Review of Asia and the Pacific*. He reviewed Gerald Y. Kinro's *A CUP OF ALOHA: THE KONA COFFEE EPIC* (University of Hawaii Press, 2003). Dr. Lake's teaching assignments include courses in ethnobotany, "Pacific Island Food and Culture," and World Literature sections in which he teaches literature from Asia and the Pacific islands.

"The
characteristic
common to
God
and
man
is apparently that:
the desire
and
the ability
to
make
things
up."

- Dorothy Sayers,
The Mind of the Maker

Alumni News

Janel Atlas, Class of 2004

Since last May, Janel Atlas has been busy using the skills she developed in the English major. She has recently published the following:

- "Small Business and Proposed Bush Policies" published on Legalzoom.com
- "Naptime Notes: A Writing Mother's Perspective" published in the Fabulist Flash, a newsletter for writers
- "City Theater Company: Delaware's Off-Broadway" coming out in the winter issue of The Delmarva Quarterly.
- "Educational and Engaging: A Visit to Iron Hill Museum" also being published in the winter issue of The Delmarva Quarterly.
- "Reading Program Bridges the Miles" will be out early next year in Reading Today, the magazine of the International Reading Association.
- "Goodbye, Hallmark" will be published in Back Home Magazine sometime next year.

On Nov. 21 she presented a 20 minute paper at the international meeting of the American Academy of Religion, held in San Antonio, TX. Based on her senior honors project, her paper was titled, "Appealing to the Prodigal Son: Ecological Responsibility in Barbara Kingsolver's Prodigal Summer." Crystal Downing, who accompanied her, says that the paper was well-received, all the Ph.D.s at the conference amazed that an undergraduate had written it.

Opportunities

Pennsylvania Collegiate Keystone Contest

Messiah College students who have had material published in the college newspaper are eligible to enter this contest, which recognizes collegiate journalism that provides relevance, integrity, and initiative in serving readers. Pennsylvania Newspaper Professionals will be judging the contest and a written critique will be given for each entry. First place winners receive a plaque and second and honorable mention winners will receive a certificate. For more information and rules, please visit

<http://www.pa-newspaper.org/foundation/Contest/keystone/2004rules.pdf>

Deadline to enter is December 21.

The Business Press Educational Foundation Internship Program

Several full-time, 10-12 week paid summer positions are available in the business press for journalism and communications students interested in magazine and Web writing, editing, marketing, production/design, and trade shows. Applications and more information available at:

http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?t=alrdgb44.rp4njb44.abv7jb44.yh6ldzn6.5472&p=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.americanbusinessmedia.com%2Fjobs%2Ffor_students.cfm

Applications must be postmarked no later than January 14, 2005 to

Peter Loibl
BPEF Internship Program
675 Third Avenue, 7th Floor
New York, NY 11201

For more specific information, email Peter Loibl at p.loibl@abmmail.com. Title the subject as "Request for BPEF Material."

Spring 2005 EAPSU Undergraduate Conference

On April 15, 2005, Kutztown University will host an undergraduate conference sponsored by the English Association of the Pennsylvania State Universities (EAPSU). This is an opportunity for undergraduates to experience a conference by presenting their own papers or attending other presentations. This year's theme is "Literature, Culture, Text" and encourages papers that extend literary analysis and writing into culture, film, media, teaching, and more. For more information visit the conference web site:

The Swinging Bridge

The Swinging Bridge is looking for writers to join their staff in the Spring semester. Positions are available in all four sections: news, magazine, opinions, and sports. If you are interested please contact the Editor, Sarah Adams: sa1169@messiah.edu

From the Chair


Transition

By Dr. Peter Powers

A professor who supervised me in my first job as an instructor of composition believed that everything in writing was transition. You can tell the quality of an essay, he believed, by looking especially at the way a writer moved from paragraph to paragraph, or more microscopically from sentence to sentence, even word to word. Does the writer move the reader smoothly from the opening assertion through the development of ideas and their support, toward a final conclusion, the interwoven texture of the prose mirroring, one hopes, the compelling logic or imagination that is driving the essay as a whole? Sometimes students call this "flow," though I suspect the natural and easy feel of the word. Let it flow. As if writing well comes to the gifted few who are freaks of nature. Of course, nothing is more natural than transition. It is as sure as death and taxes if you use language. But a good transition takes hard work and is a product of the writer's creative use of rhetorical conventions, logic and imagery. Revision is the key, that human thing in us that seeks to get it right, or at least make it better, a conscious and creative intervention.

I've thought a lot about transition in a larger sense in recent months. The English department is undergoing some profound transition. In the last couple of years we've revised most of the departmental curricula. In the past year we've lost two valued faculty members in Christopher Couch and David Dzaka. Facing his own life transitions with the illness of his wife, Laura, Paul Nisly will be retiring next December. We are in the process of one search this fall, and will do two more next year. We have hopes that we might get an additional faculty member sometime in the not too distant future. All of this means that the members of the class of 2008 will graduate from a very different department than the one they entered this fall. One continuous with the past, but with new strengths and gifts reflecting the new members of our community.

These last two weeks I've had to think about transitions in ways that make me reflect more carefully on my life as an educator and academic, ways closer to the heart of things than departmental cultures or well-written essays. Cori Tonkin, a graduate from the department in last year's class, died last month, followed within a week by President Emeritus Rodney Sawatsky. Though separated in age by more than a generation, their deaths are felt by all of us as too soon. The usual things to say about the tragedy of lives cut short or the solace that we can take at their joy in heaven seem



in the utterance as inadequate to our sense of loss. Both were friends of the department in ways big and small. I was encouraged by Rod and his wife Lorna's support for the creative life at Messiah, including the creativity of our very good student writers and our visiting writers series. As a scholar, I was inspired by the ways Rod encouraged us to question accepted orthodoxies, believing that God's faithfulness and love were sufficient for our doubts and questions. I was privileged to have Cori as an advisee, and was always impressed with the ways Cori looked at her education as an opportunity to give to others. I saw her in my office about a week before she died. She was visiting Messiah to help teach a general education course about the creative process. She was writing a novel. She wanted to speak with me about graduate school in creative writing. The possibility of scholarships. Too soon. Too soon.

This moment in the wake of death makes me think of the purposes of our education. Here I think my old supervisor saw well, but not enough. A good essay requires not only good transitions, but transitions that serve a larger purpose, that point to some kind of goal that will give the work its meaning. Often, when talking with prospective students, or to advisees wondering about what to do with their lives, I default toward the doorways to careers that English can offer. I think in terms of the college mission to educate men and women for lives of service and leadership in church and society. I try to help them imagine the ways in which English could be a springboard for such a fruitful, and always long, life that awaits them. Yet, like my supervisor, I think I am only half right. The truth of our lives, however many years we are accorded, is that they are short and fragile. Every death, the Christian recognizes, is too soon.

In reflecting on the passing of Cori and Rod, I'm reminded again of the larger purpose to which we are called. In sum, according to one of the great catechisms, "To love God and enjoy him forever." If our education is not somehow about that calling, it may be little more than sounding brass. I take a great deal of solace in knowing that for both Cori and Rod, the life of the mind and imagination was about this larger purpose. In thinking about them, I am reminded of a passage from Dante's *Paradiso* wherein Dante beholds the true light of the divine vision:

And so my mind was totally entranced
in gazing deeply, motionless, intent;
the more it saw the more it burned to see.

And one is so transformed within that light
that it would be impossible to think
of ever turning one's eyes from that sight,

because the good which is the goal of will
is all collected there, and outside it
all is defective that is perfect there.

"The more it saw, the more it burned to see." It seems to me that this is the true goal of the life of the mind and imagination, our purpose in pursuing an education in English or in any subject whatever. More this, surely, than preparation for a career that may be fulfilling or pay well, or a life that will surely end too soon for all of us, however important such concerns may be in our own sphere of action. The more we see—whether through the study of a great poet, or the sociology and church history that framed Rod's intellectual life, or even the creative writing through which Cori learned to see the world and her God—the more we burn to see. The more we see, the more we praise the Light by which we see. In this we not only prepare ourselves for the life to come. We live in it already. I am thankful that in their lives Cori and Rod testified to a life of the mind and imagination that was already a gift to their Creator.