

English News

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Messiah College English Department

<http://www.messiah.edu/departments/english/>

Department News

Consider attending two alternate chapels offered by **Lauren Winner**, who, at age 28 has already become famous as a subversive Christian author. Her first book, *Girl Meets God*, discusses her conversion to Orthodox Judaism and then her subsequent slide into Christianity. Her second book, *Real Sex: The Naked Truth About Chastity*, is the inspiration behind her Wednesday night chapel talk (April 27): "Lies the Church Tells About Sex" (Brubaker B at 7:30). On Thursday morning April 28 (9:45) she will be in Miller Auditorium, presenting a talk entitled "Scavenger Hunts: A New Metaphor for Christian Vocation." In addition, she will be responding to Crystal Downing's book, *Writing Performances: The Stages of Dorothy L. Sayers*, on Wednesday, April 27 at 4 pm in Howe Atrium, Boyer Hall. Feel free to come to any or all events.

On Thursday April 28, alumna **Janel Atlas** will talk about how she has made money publishing numerous articles since she graduated last May. She will give advice about how to start your own writing business and how to market your abilities to publishers. Her talk is sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society, which will provide refreshments at 4:15 in the Library Atrium, with Janel's talk beginning at 4:30.

On Wednesday, May 4th at 7:30, the English department will be sponsoring an **English Department Study Break** in the Larsen Student Union. Enjoy a time for some food and conversation with faculty and fellow students. There also will be a short program to honor graduating seniors and remember good events from the course of the year. Come and celebrate another great year together.

Julia Kasdorf, director of the MFA in creative writing at Penn State University, spoke at the School of Humanities chapel and also presented a reading on March 31. 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.

Melinda Nowak (Class of 1976) spoke at an alternate chapel on Monday, April 18. An English major at Messiah, Melinda went on to a career in law.

English Honors Presentations

Rachel Petersen—Monday, April 25, 4 pm in Boyer 231

The "Other" Approach: Reconciling Feminist Readers to George Eliot

Lucas Sheaffer—Tuesday, April 26, 4 pm in Boyer 334

A Time to Be Silent: Experiencing Elie Wiesel's Vision of God, Silence and Truth

Rebecca Buckham—Monday, May 2, 4 pm in Boyer 234

Milton's Dialogic Community of Creation: *Paradise Lost* and an Environmental Ethic of Partnership

Jordan Windholz—Tuesday, May 3, 4 pm in Boyer 334

Ben Okri's (Imagi)nation: Abiku, Orality, and Narrating the Nation-State"

Erin Ryan—Wednesday, May 4, 6 pm in Boyer 234

An Exploration in Novel Writing

"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

Jeffrey Thomson presented a reading on Tuesday, April 19th as a part of the Poets and Writers Series. He directs the MFA in Creative Writing at Chatham College in Pittsburgh. He is the author of *Renovation* (Carnegie Mellon) and two previous collections of poetry, *The Country of Lost Sons* and *The Halo Brace*.

Faculty News

In Chicago on April 9th, Professor Powers presented an essay at national conference of The Society for the Study of MultiEthnic Literatures of the United States (MELUS). His essay was entitled "'Gawd Ain' No Lie': Rhetorics of Protest and Religion in Richard Wright." Professor Powers also had three articles appear recently in the newly published *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* (Routledge 2005). His articles are entitled "Religion," "Religious Organizations," and "Frederick Asbury Cullen."

Christine Perrin had her poem titled "The Second Coming" accepted in the American Literary Review. She will also be an artist in residence in the Orvieto, Italy campus of Gordon College, for ten days in June.

Student News

Graduating senior Ruth Brown has plans to attend Regent University School of Law.

Graduating senior Jordan Windholz has plans to attend Colorado University for their program in creative writing.

Rebecca Buckham presented a paper at the Southeastern Conference on Christianity and Literature April 14-16, in Campbellsville, KY. The paper, about Wendell Berry's novel *Jayber Crow*, is titled "Literature and Eschatology: Transformed Community in *Jayber Crow* and the Christian Narrative."

Mike Raffensperger's paper entitled "2+2=? : The Prophecies of George Orwell" was accepted for the Spring 2005 EAPSU conference on April 15. Mike, a business administration major, wrote the paper for Dr. Downing's "Fiction to Film" class. The paper is a deconstruction of Orwell's *1984*, and Michael Radford's film on the same.

Kerry Brooks, Jordan Windholz, Lucas Sheaffer, Elizabeth Brotzman, and Rachel Petersen presented papers at the 2005 PCEA conference in Gettysburg the weekend of April 9th. Their papers are as follows:

Not No Idiot: A Critical Look at *Forrest Gump*, Elizabeth Brotzman

Whelan's Victimization of Maggie Tulliver, Rachel Petersen

Creating Connections: Dissecting the Isolation in *The Hours*, Kerry Brooks

Self-Confession and Social Stagnation in *Notes from the Underground*, Jordan Windholz

The Next Day: True Freedom after *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Lucas Sheaffer

Carolyn Eanes and Ruth Kitchin won second and third place, respectively, in the annual Peace Speech competition. The competition took place on Thursday, March 31 in Boyer and was sponsored by the Sider Institute. Excerpts from their speeches are included at the end of the newsletter.

Alumni News

Nick Lauer, Class of 2003

Nick was recently accepted to Yale's Institute of Sacred Music, where he will work to earn his Masters of Arts.

Deborah DeGeorge, Class of 2003

Deborah has written several full plays, one of which was staged at Catholic University, and has coauthored a children's musical for an area catholic school. She is also engaged with plans for a wedding in August.

Joy Wang, Class of 1998

Joy recently received her doctorate from Oxford University.

Opportunities

The Lilly Work-Study Position is available for both full time work this summer and 10 hours a week for the 2005-2006 academic year. Duties include assisting staff in writing profiles of students and alumni for Career Center website. Necessary skills and characteristics are interviewing, writing, research, time management, and independent work style. For more information, contact Deb Hoffman, ext. 6016, or hoffman@messiah.edu. Applications are available by contacting Beth Mumper, ext. 6016, or stopping by the Career Center.

The Chronicle of Higher Education welcomes applications for a \$2,000 award for student journalists, in memory of a former reporter on their staff. Details on the annual prize are available on their website: <http://chronicle.com/help/milleraward.htm>. The deadline to apply for the award this year is June 30.

Excerpt from Carolyn Eanes's Peace Speech entry, "Faces of the Forgotten"

I was raised in a Christian community that emphasized the concern in Jesus' teachings for the downtrodden and forgotten; a couple of verses from Matthew chapter 25 encapsulate this message succinctly: "...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:35, 36, 40 NRSV). Caring conscientiously for "the least of these" was instilled in my upbringing. So too was the adage that an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind. From a relatively young age, I became aware of Jesus' radical response to the world's injustices—his response that forgiveness should be unleashed unendingly (seventy times seven), that the kingdom of God has room for even the worst of sinners, and that no human is righteous enough to judge another. Jesus challenges us that those who are without sin should be the first to cast their stones (John 8:7 paraphrased); how can any of us consider ourselves blameless enough to advocate the death of another human being? How can any of us deem another's sin so much worse than our own? Jesus exhorted us to notice the plank in our own eyes before examining the speck in the eyes of our neighbors (Matt 7:3 paraphrased). Perhaps many would consider convicted murderers to be among the worst of sinners, the lowest of the low, the un-touchables. But to Jesus, they are among "the least of these", the members of his family, the ones who we are called to serve.

Raised under the influence of these beliefs and understandings, you may not find it so unusual that my 5th grade class embarked on a mission to infiltrate the austere cells of death row with vestiges of humanity; we sent out hand-drawn Christmas cards and eventually developed pen-pals. On a number of occasions, my father and I even visited SCI Greene to meet face to face with my pen-pal. Those firsthand encounters with death row in all of its sterile inhumanness will always remain indelible in my memory. Walking down the long, hollow corridors that lead from the front office to the visitor's booths, we'd hear echoing and clanging of heavy doors and locks in distant corners of that lifeless dungeon. The immaculately polished floors and spotless windows constantly reminded us of the absence of humanity. Of course, making it this far into the prison was a feat in and of itself; the obstacles visitors had to overcome just to get past the front entrance changed arbitrarily. As a result, many family members who try to visit their loved ones are turned back at the gates, as if their long drive is not burdensome enough. (Most inmates at SCI Greene are from Philadelphia, a five to six hour drive from Greene County in western PA.) Over time, these obstacles of distance and unpredictability discourage visitors, and the family ties that are already strained by circumstance disintegrate even more. Thus, in the words of famous death row inmate Mumia Abu Jamal (who is housed at SCI Greene), "prisoners are as isolated psychologically as they are temporally and spatially. By state actions, they become 'dead' to those who know and love them, and therefore dead to themselves. For who are people, but for their relations and relationships?...To such men and women, the actual execution is a fait accompli, a formality already accomplished in spirit, where the state concludes its premeditated drama by putting the 'dead' to death a second time" (10). To most of society, death row inmates might as well be dead. But for me—one who has stepped beyond the wall that separates us from those forgotten faces—I know I have glimpsed humanity that God loves.

Excerpt from **Ruth Kitchin**'s Peace Speech entry, "Serving the Country, Serving the World: The Historical Example of Civilian Public Service and Its Implications Today"

We must also realize that anything we do will most likely be lost in the annals of history. Until spring semester of my freshman year, I had never heard of the Civilian Public Service. Twelve thousand men said "No!" to the most popular war in US history and not one of my textbooks ever mentioned it. Some in the Historic Peace Churches carry the memories, but there is likely nothing we can do to remedy the general ignorance on the subject. People are either uninterested or still consider the men who wouldn't fight Hitler traitors.

In the same way, whether we ever create another CPS or just work to bring peace to the world, we will likely be unnoticed and unremembered. Yet the CPSers did make a difference in the areas they influenced. They improved care in mental homes, helped fight a national food shortage, supplied sanitary facilities to hookworm-ridden communities, provided health care in Puerto Rico, and aided in medical experiments. They also cared for our country's natural resources, combated soil erosion, and battled dangerous forest fires. What matters is not that we become peace heroes, but that we do show Christ's love.

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