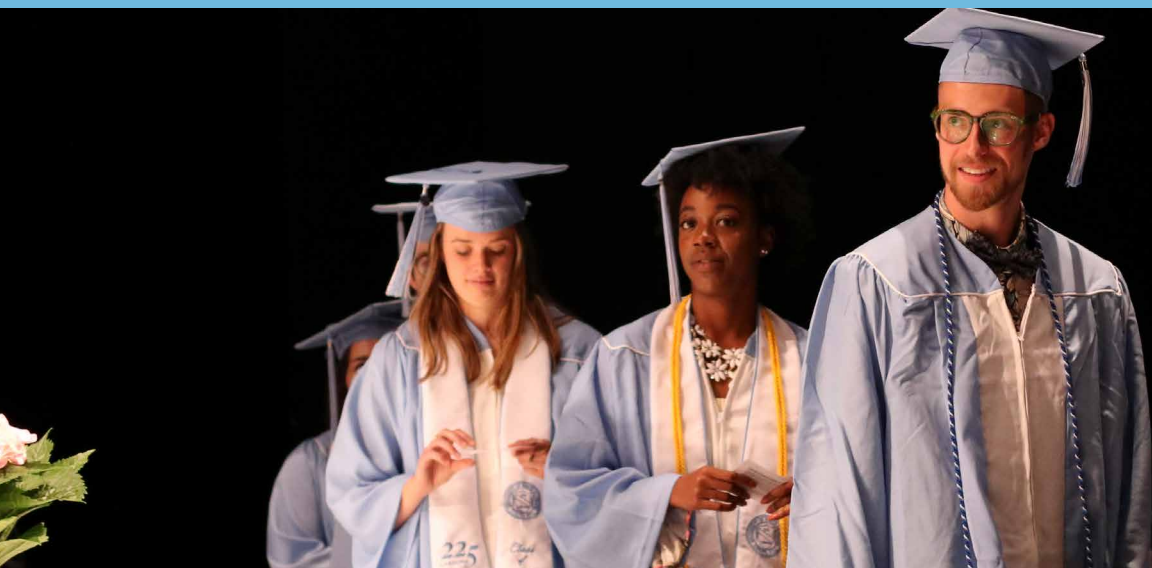


The Department of English
and Comparative Literature
at the University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill



Annual Report 2019-2020



A Letter from Mary Floyd-Wilson, Chair

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Having faced the challenges of the confederate monument controversy and profound budgetary constraints last year, we all began this academic year with the hope of smoother sailing. Little did we know that we would find ourselves living through one of the most extraordinary and harrowing periods of recent history. As we in the Department of English and Comparative Literature endeavor to uphold our educational mission, we feel, in waves, both heartbroken and inspired by our community's efforts to tend to humanity's needs during this crisis.

As many of you know, in the middle of spring break, the University announced its intention to move all teaching online. With astonishing speed, efficiency, and compassion, ECL instructors and staff sprang into action. Those who knew how to teach remotely set up accessible guides, workshops, and tutorials to help those who had no experience with Zoom or Sakai. With children and extended family at home, many in our ECL



Mary Floyd-Wilson

community are achieving daily miracles as online instructors and in-person caregivers. Our top-notch Writing Program, directed by Jordynn Jack, has been indispensable in shepherding us through the trials of adapting to this strange new world. We are grateful to the tireless support provided by Jordynn Jack, Marc Cohen, Candace Epps-Robertson, Liz Gualtieri-Reed, Michael Gutierrez, Bradley Hammer, Jennifer Larson (whose contributions to our transition to online teaching were **profiled by the College**), Hilary Lithgow, Courtney Rivard, Todd Taylor, and Ross White.

We owe thanks as well to our heroic teaching fellows who have also led the department in mentoring and remote-teaching guidance, most particularly Bridget Donnelly, Tyler Easterbrook, Anne Fertig, Donald Holmes, Jennifer Howard, Margaret Mauer, Liz Shand, Morgan Souza, and Carlie Wetzel.

To give you all a sense of the resilience and fellowship that now informs our virtual lives, I asked our instructors to send me stories from their “classrooms,” in both synchronous

and asynchronous forms. A running theme is the laudable tenacity of our students. See page 4 for these stories.

As you read through the newsletter, you will realize that we have documented our creative, professional, and literary achievements prior to quarantine. We did have a lively and productive time before social distancing became the new normal. We welcomed the unrivaled Dorothy Allison in the fall as the winner of our 2019 Thomas Wolfe Prize. Minrose Gwin returned to Chapel Hill to introduce Allison's Thomas Wolfe Lecture. In February 2020 we were blessed with a full week of Nikky Finney, our Frank B. Hanes Writer-in-Residence, who not only gave an electrifying reading from her new book *Love Child's Hotbed of Occasional Poetry: Poems and Artifacts* but also lit up a number of panel discussions and classroom visits.

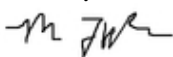
Among the many awards bestowed on our faculty this year, Philip Gura, William S. Newman Distinguished Professor, won "The Order of the Long Leaf Pine," conferred by the Governor. UNC recognized John McGowan with the Thomas Jefferson Award in honor of a full career that has "exemplified the ideals and objectives of Thomas Jefferson." Candace Epps-Robertson's monograph won the Coalition for Community Writing's 2019 Outstanding Book Award. Michael Chitwood won the Library of Virginia Literary Award for Poetry; Tyree Daye won a 2019 Whiting Award; Ross White is the co-winner of the Sexton Poetry Prize. And in honor of **Dr. J. Lee Greene**, the department recognized Ph.D. candidate Eddie Moore with the inaugural J. Lee Greene Award for Excellence in Postgraduate Work on Race and Ethnicity.

We will miss the three wonderful faculty members who have retired this year: Pam Durban, John McGowan, and Christopher Armitage (after 53 years!). You will find all three profiled in these pages.

In closing, I want to let you know that we have been planning to celebrate the 225th anniversary of the study of literature and writing at UNC-Chapel Hill on April 9-10, 2021. This special reunion event will be a terrific opportunity for you to visit with your fellow English and Comparative Literature alums here on campus and re-connect with the department through an exciting schedule of festive activities. Over the next few months, we encourage you to check out our 225th Anniversary webpage: <https://ecl225.unc.edu/>. We recognize that we may need to adjust these dates, given our rapidly changing circumstances, so do keep an eye out for updates.

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." —*All's Well That Ends Well*

Warmly,



Mary

Mary Floyd-Wilson, Chair
Department of English and Comparative Literature

DOECL Faculty Respond Quickly to Student Needs During Outbreak

In mid-March, UNC extended its spring break by a week to organize its response to the coronavirus. Faculty in the Department of English and Comparative Literature swiftly banded together to support each other's efforts to take their instruction online. The results are a testament to the ingenuity and commitment of our faculty *and* students.

John McGowan describes the dedication of one of his students from the University of Hong Kong, a science major who had been fully invested in his Great Books class. When the virus came, it took her ten days to get home to Hong Kong, where she had to go into a mandatory fourteen-day quarantine. He's now thrilled to report that she joins class via Zoom with the same devotion, "despite the fact that 12:30 EDT in the US is 12:30 am for her She cheerfully insists that she is a 'night owl.'"



One of Marc Cohen's international students returned home to China, where she was also placed in quarantine on arrival. She let Marc know that a passenger on her flight had tested positive, and then he heard nothing from her for days, while he worried. "Then, just as suddenly as she had disappeared, she reappeared as one of the framed faces in the gallery view of my Zoom classroom. She was smiling." And he felt a rush of relief.

Ted Leinbaugh tells us that one of his students traveled to Uganda to visit her mother who is with the State Department; she is now stranded there without textbooks and few personal possessions. But with the help of digital versions of our textbooks, “she is reading Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and Homer’s *Iliad* with views of the lush Ugandan landscape in the background: no fake Zoom background needed!”

Bland Simpson first wondered how his Playwriting class would translate online, but he reports that “Carolina students are making the magic of the theatre magical in a new way.” To give one example, he describes how one student, now at home in China, where her N.C. morning class had become an 11 PM session, gave an arresting performance. Taking on the role of Thanatos (with vulture-like wings) from Danise Wu’s *Women’s Business*, Wei Zhang projected from the other side of the world. Black-clad, she “flapped her arms and growled out a celebration of Hector’s death, delivering Danise’s lines dramatically, synchronously and far more chillingly than anything Bela Lugosi ever said in *Dracula* . . . Truly unforgettable.”

Several instructors tell us, as Martin Johnson puts it, that “with a patchwork of technologies, and a shared commitment to seeing the semester through, our lives are even more connected than before.” When a student veteran in Hilary Lithgow’s class drew on his own experiences to analyze a scene in Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, the Zoom effect of centering his face on everyone’s screen generated an indelible moment of intense attentiveness. Adam Price has found that online learning has actually increased student participation in his creative writing workshops. Susan Irons notes that the students in her Advanced Business Communication course are now functioning as teams do in the “real business world”—virtually! And Leslie Frost is excited to share that her first year students, who have been learning about New Deal programs throughout the semester, including the Federal Theatre Project and the Federal Writers’ Project, have asked that their capstone project include a proposal for a new national arts project. Intriguingly (and not surprisingly?), the students in David Ross’s course “The Literature of the Last Man” prefer to keep the discussion somewhat removed from our real-world circumstances.

Liz Gualtieri-Reed asked her students to share their experiences with the quarantine and their informal exchanges have increased the class’s sense of camaraderie. Tyree Daye felt nervous initially, “but what I didn’t take into account (because sometimes my faith in human beings is low) was the perseverance of our students. They came into our Zoom sessions, ready to do the work.” Also apprehensive at the start, Kim Stern discovered that her students did not simply transition to her newly asynchronous class, but they were actively “responding to one another.” She adds, “I have been truly touched and amazed at the momentum and energy of these students. It has made me proud to be their professor.”

Our faculty continue to teach with energy and hope despite the obstacles, even if it means working from their truck in the McDonald’s parking lot. Check out *The Daily Tar Heel* story on our own Matt Randal O’Wain: <https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2020/04/interesting-professor-stories-0406>. —Mary Floyd-Wilson

Philip Gura Awarded The Order of the Long Leaf Pine

Dr. Philip Gura, William S. Newman Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at UNC-Chapel Hill, was awarded **The Order of the Long Leaf Pine** on May 7th. First awarded in 1963, The Order of the Long Leaf Pine is among the highest honors bestowed by the North Carolina Governor.

Gura is a literary and cultural historian who has published widely in American literature



Philip Gura

and religious history, as well as nineteenth century-American music history. He served as the editor of *Early American Literature* for a decade and was on the editorial board of the multi-volume *History of the Book in America*. He is also the recipient of a number of prestigious awards including, the 2008 Distinguished Scholar Award from the Division on American Literature to 1800 of the Modern Language Association and the American Antiquarian Society's 2006-07 Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Scholar in Residence.

significant contributions to the state and their communities through their exemplary service and exceptional accomplishments. Honorees are conferred the rank of "Ambassador Extraordinary" by the governor to honor a proven record of service to North Carolina or other special achievement.

The Order of the Long Leaf Pine is awarded to "friends of North Carolina" who have made

Gura was surprised and delighted by the award, saying "it means that after thirty years at UNC, I am almost a native of the state!" He looks forward to being allowed to make the Old North State toast: "Here's to the land of the Long Leaf Pine, / The summer land where the sun doth shine, / Where the weak grow strong and the strong grow great, / Here's to Down Home, / The Old North State!"

Previous winners include Maya Angelou, Andy Griffith, Michael Jordan, Tennessee Williams, and Oprah Winfrey. —*Hannah Montgomery*

Jessica Wolfe Awarded Oxford Fellowship, Appears on BBC's "In Our Time"

Dr. Jessica Wolfe, professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, was awarded the Valerie Plumer Visiting Fellowship in Early Modern English Literature at Oxford University. Co-sponsored by Oxford's Centre for Early Modern Studies, the position allowed her to reside in St. Anne's College and conduct research throughout the winter term, delivering one lecture to the college during her stay. Wolfe also delivered lectures at Merton College, Oxford, in February, and at the Sorbonne's Paris Early Modern Seminar in March, as well as a keynote lecture at the Canada Milton Seminar in Toronto in April. She is scheduled to deliver the keynote lecture at the Society for Renaissance Studies Conference in Norwich in July.



Jessica Wolfe

Wolfe spoke on the BBC's weekly podcast, *In Our Time*, in June. In Our Time is a scholarly podcast on BBC Radio 4, hosted by Melvyn Bragg.

Each week it brings in three "absolutely top-class academics" to explain a historical event or figure, or a scientific theory or phenomenon, to the general public. This year, *In Our Time* is celebrating 20 years of radio specials and podcasts and now has over 850 episodes available online. The show is quite popular in the U.K. and reaches two million listeners a week.

Wolfe discussed Sir Thomas Browne, an English physician during the Renaissance, and his book, *Religio Medici*, joking, "I was told ahead of time that we couldn't bring in notes, and so I didn't, only to turn up and see that my two colleagues had copious notes in front of them! So everything you hear on the show from me was spontaneous, for better or for worse."

Despite the off-the-cuff nature of the show, Dr. Wolfe wasn't nervous, "until I found out how many listeners the show gets—in the millions, apparently, a number borne out by the fact that I've heard today from several British friends I haven't talked to in decades, telling me they enjoyed listening to the show." —*Erik Maloney and Hannah Montgomery*

Candace Epps-Robertson Wins Outstanding Book Award

Dr. Candace Epps-Robertson, Assistant Professor, received the Coalition for Community Writing's 2019 Outstanding Book Award for her *Resisting Brown: Race, Literacy, and Citizenship in the Heart of Virginia* (2018). In the book, Epps-Robertson examines the Free School Association—established by African American community activists when Virginia's Prince Edward County shut down public education from 1959–64 rather than funding integrated schools—as a site for significant rhetorical work and as an important historical moment for thinking broadly about racialized notions of citizenship, literacy, and censorship. The award was presented in October at the Coalition's conference in Philadelphia. —Erik Maloney



Candace Epps-Robertson

Viscomi Delivers Blake Lecture

Dr. Joseph Viscomi spoke at Princeton University in October as part of a symposium on nineteenth-century literature and art. His illustrated lecture, entitled “Authenticating Blake: Life-Time Impressions, Posthumous Prints, and Forgeries; or, Printing Blake:



Joseph Viscomi

William, Catherine, and All the Others,” will be published as a digital exhibition in the William Blake Archive this year. It is derived from a 45,000-word essay on Blake, Catherine Blake, and Frederick Tatham, in the Fall 2019 issue of *Blake / An Illustrated Quarterly*. This long essay also lies behind the Blake Archive's digital editions of copies F and K of *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*, which were published in September 2019. Both copies were thought to have been printed by Frederick Tatham, ca. 1831, but copy K was printed by Blake, ca. 1826, and copy F by Catherine Blake, ca. 1826.

—Erik Maloney

Michael Chitwood Wins Library of Virginia Literary Award

Teaching Assistant Professor Michael Chitwood was named a winner at the 22nd annual Library of Virginia Literary Awards. Chitwood shared the 2019 Library of Virginia Literary Award for Poetry with the late Claudia Emerson.

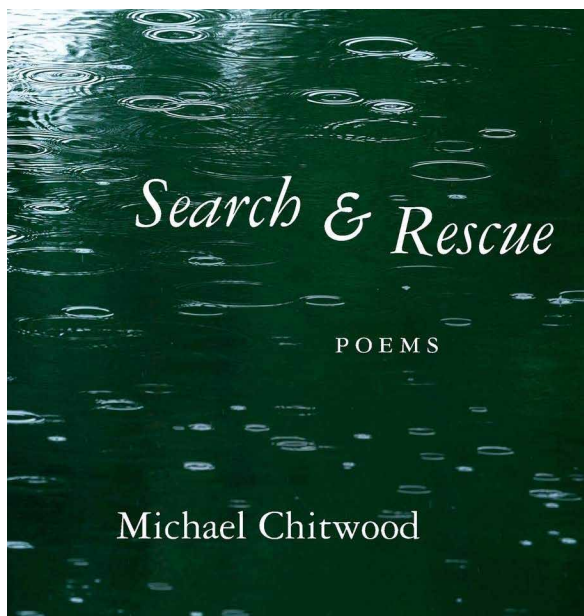


Michael Chitwood

“The Commonwealth of Virginia is home to many talented writers whose work inspires and informs readers across the world,” said Librarian of Virginia Sandra G. Treadway. “The Library’s annual Literary Award Celebration is such a joyous way to honor their amazing work and to introduce them to new audiences.” The Library seeks to honor the literary heritage of Virginia in its particularity, commemorating authors from the region that extol its unique characteristics.

Chitwood’s book *Search & Rescue* was praised by the judges for seeing “familiar subjects in fresh ways through clear diction and rich imagery that sounds just right to the ear and the mind.”

Chitwood himself speaks lovingly about both Virginia and the award. “I am deeply honored by the Library of Virginia nomination. It is one of the highest literary awards that my native state offers, and I join the company of many poets that I have long admired. Much of my work was inspired by the mountains of Virginia and to have that recognized is especially pleasing.” —*Bailey Fernandez*



Tyree Daye Wins 2019 Whiting Award

Teaching Assistant Professor Tyree Daye won a 2019 Whiting Award, a prestigious \$50,000 award supporting the work of talented emerging writers. Daye's first collection of poetry *River Hymns* also received the *American Poetry Review*/Honickman First Book Prize.

Since 1985, the Whiting Foundation has supported creative writing through the Whiting Awards, given annually to ten emerging writers in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. The honor is awarded to recipients based on "early accomplishment and the promise of great work to come."

This year's recipients join a storied and accomplished lineage of great writers also awarded a Whiting prize, including Tony Kushner, Terrance Hayes, Yiyun Lee, and Tracy K. Smith.

The Whiting Committee praised Daye's work for its exceptional clarity, in both his poetic language and in his world-creation, noting that his "pictures of a river life are strung together in language that is clear, lucid, unexpected, and often unforgettable: image-making of the highest order."

Daye says the Whiting Award will allow him more time to focus on his writing: "I can take the summer off." Moreover, though, he is "just excited to join [a] stellar list of artists." He is currently working on *Cardinal*, a book of poetry to be published by Copper Canyon



Tyree Daye

Press in 2020 and has works published in *Prairie Schooner*, *New York Times*, and the *Nashville Review*, among others.

Daye joined UNC in 2018. "The Department of English and Comparative Literature has allowed for a full exploration of my talents as a teacher and writer," Daye said, "by encouraging faculty to create a new course curriculum, enabling them to teach classes that merge aspects of American history and creative writing, and showing students that all knowledge is connected." —*Carly Schnitzler*

Ross White Wins Sexton Poetry Prize for New Poetry Collection

Teaching Assistant Professor Ross White was selected as a co-winner of the Sexton Poetry Prize for the best unpublished poetry collection by an American poet. The Sexton Poetry Prize, run by the UK-based independent press Eyewear Publishing, gives winners \$1,500, as well as publication and distribution in the UK, Ireland and the US. White's forthcoming book, *Charm Offensive*, shares the honor with Brooklyn poet Sarah Bridgins and her work *Death and Exes*.

Charm Offensive careens through ancient Rome, feudal Japan, and present-day Italian parks and museums, examining “the compromises people have made throughout history, compromises that leave them loved and hated, and the ways in which our own modern charms can leave us scarred and breathless.” Of the winners, judge Lloyd Schwartz said: “Every word seemed personal and deeply felt, as if both of these poets urgently needed to tell me what they were thinking. Not a single poem in either of these collections ended where I expected it to—as if each writer was engaged in the process of discovering in the course of a poem what it was they each had to say.”



Ross White

In addition to *Charm Offensive*, White is the author of the chapbooks *The Polite Society* and *How We Came Upon the Colony*, as well as the micro-chapbook *sin Wave*. His poems have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Best New Poets*, *New England Review*, *Poetry Daily*, *Tin House*, and *The Southern Review*, among others. In addition to his position in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, he is the Executive Director of Bull City Press, a Durham-based literary press focusing on chapbooks of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction, as well as the Editor of *Four Way Review*. He also serves on the Foundation Board for *Beloit Poetry Journal*. Since 2007, he has been a coordinator of The Grind Daily Writing Series, and with Ashley Nissler, he curates the House Party Reading Series in Hillsborough, NC. He is also the Administrative Director of the Frost Place Conference on Poetry. —Carly Schnitzler

Martin L. Johnson Named Finalist for Richard Wall Award

Dr. Martin L. Johnson, Assistant Professor, was listed as a finalist for the **Richard Wall Memorial Award** (previously the Theatre Library Association Award) for his 2018 book *Main Street Movies: The History of Local Film in the United States*.

The book chronicles a historical phenomenon that Johnson calls “local film,” which proliferated from the late 1890s through the 1950s. In local films, a small town is filmed, and the result is screened in a theater for residents to see. In the book, Johnson explores the colorful history and variety of these local films as they flourished in the early part of the 20th century.



Martin L. Johnson

“I was thrilled to learn a few weeks ago that my book was a finalist for the Richard M. Wall award,” Johnson stated. “Looking through the list of books that have previously received this award, I saw so many that influenced my own work and that have helped shape the evolving field of film and media studies. I’m deeply honored that the selection committee chose *Main Street Movies* to join this illustrious group.”

The winner of the award was Maya Montañez Smulker, for her book *Liberating Hollywood: Women Directors and the Feminist Reform of 1970s American Cinema*.

Professor and Undergraduate Co-edit Chapbook

Associate Professor Gabrielle Calvocoressi and Marina Greenfeld, an undergraduate student double-majoring in English and Slavic Languages with a Creative Writing minor, worked together to create *Bounty Everlasting*, a chapbook celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the periodical *Southern Cultures*. Though an undergraduate, Greenfeld was named one of the editors of the chapbook. Greenfeld is entering her fourth year as an editorial assistant for *Southern Cultures*, where Calvocoressi has served as poetry editor for two years.

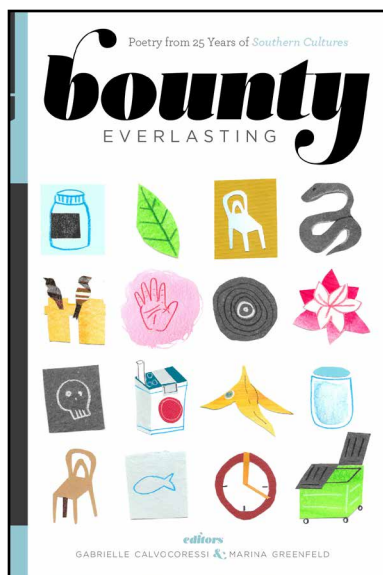
Southern Cultures, a peer-reviewed quarterly published by UNC Press, explores the history, politics, literature, and art of the South through essays, fiction, poetry, and

photography. *Bounty Everlasting* was compiled from poems that had previously appeared in the journal. Calvocoressi and Greenfeld chose sixteen poems to include after reading through hundreds of candidates.

The authors chosen include three UNC faculty members: Michael Chitwood, who has twice won the Roanoke-Chowan Award for Poetry; Michael McFee, who won the 2018 North Carolina Award for Literature; and Tyree Daye, who won a 2019 Whiting Award.

According to Calvocoressi and Greenfeld, *Bounty Everlasting* creates a communal space for past, present, and future southern writers. They hope it challenges and expands people's view of the South.

To read more about *Bounty Everlasting*, see Laura J. Toler's article in **UNC's Arts & Sciences magazine**. —Heidi Hannoush



Hilary Lithgow Codirects "Troops to Teachers" Project

Thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Teaching Associate Professor Dr. Hilary Lithgow is codirecting the "Troops to Teachers" project with Andy Mink at the National Humanities Center. In June, the project held an intensive weeklong program for fourteen K-12 teachers with military backgrounds, and they are continuing to work with these educators to prepare events to bridge the civilian-military divide in their schools and communities.

"Their projects," Lithgow writes, "are wonderfully diverse and creative." Together they discussed a Mike Wiley play about the experiences of military spouses, heard from a panel of speakers about their experiences growing up in military families, and read a range of literature about military service. The teachers involved in the workshop will hold the events they've designed in the coming months, and the group will reconvene in January to share their experiences. This important public humanities project puts literature to work outside the classroom and across the state.

Lithgow has worked in this area before. She has written, for example, about David Finkel's memoir *The Good Soldiers*, which recounts his time embedded with an infantry battalion in Baghdad during the Iraq War. From 2014 to 2017, she co-facilitated Vets for Words, a book group for veterans which was also supported by the NEH. —Erik Maloney and Bailey Fernandez

Dorothy Allison Receives Thomas Wolfe Prize, Delivers Lecture

For those with an interest in contemporary literature, the Thomas Wolfe lectures are an annual treat. Fans of Southern literature were thrilled by this year's lecture, delivered in October by renowned author and 2019 Thomas Wolfe Prize winner Dorothy Allison.

Allison, born in 1949 in Greenville, South Carolina, has published the novels *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) and *Cavedweller* (1999), the short story collection *Trash* (2002), and the essay collection *Skin: Talking about Sex, Class and Literature* (2004), among other books of poetry and prose. Her work is anchored in her biographical experience



Dorothy Allison

growing up as a lesbian in the working class South. Her writing has been praised by *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and by the novelist Barbara Kingsolver.

Her first novel, *Bastard out of Carolina*, received the Ferro Grumley Award and the ALA Award for Lesbian and Gay Writing (now the Stonewall Book Awards) and was a finalist for the 1992 National Book Award. *Cavedweller*, named a New York Times Notable Book of the Year, again won an ALA Award and was a finalist for the Lillian Smith Prize. Her short story "Compassion" was selected as one of the *Best American Short Stories* for 2003 and included in *Best New Stories from the South 2003*. In 2007, Allison was awarded the Robert Penn Warren Award for Fiction. She is a board member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers.

The Thomas Wolfe Prize and Lecture honor the memory of one of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's most famous alumni, Thomas Clayton Wolfe '20, author of the novels *Look Homeward, Angel* and *Of Time and the River*. The award was established in 1999 with an endowed gift to the Department of English & Comparative Literature and recognizes contemporary writers with distinguished bodies of work. And in doing so, the program seeks to give University students and the surrounding community the opportunity to hear important writers of their time.
—Bailey Fernandez

Nikky Finney Visits as Frank B. Hanes Writer-in-Residence

Nikky Finney, winner of the National Book Award for Poetry, dazzled the audience with a stunning reading from her new book in a public reading as part of the 2020 Frank B. Hanes Writer-in-Residence program. Finney also participated in two public panel discussions, “Poetry and Sports: Poetry in Motion—Motion in Poetry” and “Blacker than a hundred midnights: Public History and Memory and the Souls of Blackfolk in the South.”

Born in 1957 in Conway, near the coast of South Carolina, Finney grew up during the Black Arts, Black Power, and Civil Rights movements. She began writing poetry as a teenager and later attended Talladega College in Alabama, developing a voice that draws broad connections across literature, history, politics, and culture. As a poet and librettist, a teacher and traveling lecturer, a photographer, a performance artist, and a committed activist, she has constructed a body of work that, while public and engaged, also dives deep into the lived experiences of ordinary people.



Finney has published five books of poetry: *On Wings Made of Gauze* (1985); *Rice* (1995), which

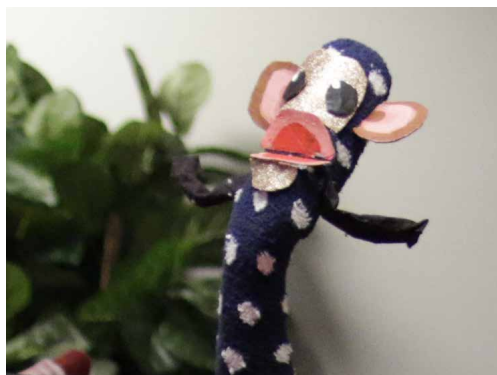
Nikky Finney

received a PEN American Open Book Award; *The World Is Round* (2003), which received a Benjamin Franklin Award for Poetry; *Head Off and Split* (2011), which won the National Book Award for Poetry; and, most recently, *Love Child's Hotbed of Occasional Poetry: Poems and Artifacts* (2020). Deeply involved with the Black Arts movement, she is a founding member of the Affrilachian Poets, a group of poets who seek to capture the diversity of the Appalachian experience.

The Frank B. Hanes Writer-in-Residence Program began in 2016, building on previous departmental writer-in-residence positions. The program brings important contemporary writers to campus to meet students and faculty and to offer public readings and panel discussions. Named for Frank Borden Hanes Sr., who endowed the Thomas Wolfe scholarship, the program further invigorates the literary culture that thrives on UNC's campus. —Erik Maloney, photo by Forrest Clonts

Marianne Gingher Offers First-Year Seminar on the Puppet Stage

Entering Professor Marianne Gingher's Greenlaw office is like walking into a carnival wagon or a circus dressing room. The walls are colored bright red, and they are decorated with posters, miscellaneous American memorabilia, and puppets. Three stand upright on the desk between Professor Gingher and me; several stand next to the door; there's a whole stack at the back of the room, and throughout our interview she will pull out a dozen more from drawers and file cabinets.



She is coming off the success of her first year seminar, the English 89 class "Writing for the Puppet Stage." The course was funded by a faculty support grant from **UNC BeAM's Makerspace**. These grants help instructors incorporate Makerspace resources into their classes, with the goal of making students comfortable with the hands-on use of state-of-the-art technology and providing them with skills that will prove useful in their professional careers.

The seminar thus demanded direct work with materials while also surveying the history of American puppetry. Only two students in the course identified as potential humanities majors. As Gingher puts it, "These are kids who...had never mixed paint. They didn't know how to thread a needle." The class gave them an opportunity to get their hands dirty and try new things as they studied a performance tradition that was totally novel to most of them. She taught and recommends John Bell's *Strings, Hands, Shadows: A Modern Puppet History*, and students composed a total of six theatrical writing assignments throughout the semester, leading up to the final show.

Students were required, Gingher writes, "to take an orientation at Makerspace and then to train in one or more technologies, depending on how they wanted to incorporate Makers resources into their puppet-making projects. Some used the 3-D printers to make pendants for puppets to wear; some used woodworking to build props; most of them certified in sewing to make simple costumes for puppets." Her real goal was "to introduce them to the Makers resources as first-year students. They will have many semesters ahead of them to develop skills there.

She and her students finished the Makerspace course by presenting the puppet show "The Animals Among Us." It represents the culmination of a semester's worth of learning about the history and craft of the puppet stage. For the show, she had the students engage in "a bit of a competition. At the end of the semester, we divided into three theater companies. And each theater company...had to come up with a little play—a five to ten minute play—in which all of them had a role. And they had to brainstorm a script; they

had to make prototypes of puppets they could later develop, and then perform them. And the whole class would decide which one out of the three we would include in the final.”

The puppetry seminar “was one of the few places where I could build what I wrote,” said Tianyi Peng, a student in the course. “It was embarrassing at first to make masks and sing songs in front of your classmates, but everyone was in the same boat, and by the end of the semester everyone was really invested in the final show.”

For Peng, the puppet stage encouraged students to hone their creative writing skills and offered an accessible entry point to the performing arts. “Puppetry forces you to distill the story and leave only the most important and expressive details for your audience, which results in slice-of-life shorts that are easier to perform but can still be as impactful as larger productions. Because of the smaller scale and the tendency for puppeteers to do everything from the script to the stage, I feel that a puppetry course could be a good introduction for people who are interested in entering the performing arts, as it allows them to do a bit of every role.”



Other students spoke of the seminar in similarly glowing terms. “I was not expecting to take a puppet-making class my first semester at UNC,” said Lily Dickinson. “It was one of the best decisions I have ever made. The class opened my eyes to the power that puppetry has in making powerful statements, sharing ideas, and building a community. This class provides an example of how art and education can fit seamlessly together. It shows how students with different skills, artistic and otherwise, can create something monumental. This class should be a general requirement for all students in all majors. Everyone deserves to be a puppeteer for a moment.”



Gingher’s own work in the puppet theater has spanned a decade, involving traveling puppet shows and performances at the Puppeteers of America Foundation. Describing herself, she tells me: “I’m very much a material person—I like to have my hands in a mess.” Her troupe has taken a two-year hiatus, and she “was just missing it,” so she “wanted to try [a seminar on] writing for the puppet stage, writing for the tiny stage.”

Although the semester is over, Ginger's puppet plans for the department continue. "Going forward," she says, "I would like to teach the class again. I'm looking to teach it as a first year seminar in the fall again. And then I may try to finagle a way to teach it as part of the creative writing curriculum."

In future versions of the course, she looks forward to using Makerspace resources to further enrich students' learning experience. "Going forward, I can certainly see that if students wanted to make 'crankies,' for example"—moving panoramas that combine shadow puppetry with illustrated scrolls—"Makers would offer heaps more resources."
—Bailey Fernandez with Erik Maloney



About This Annual Report

Most of the content and photography in this newsletter was produced by the faculty and students who staff the Digital Literacy and Communications (DLC) Lab, including Dr. Sarah Boyd, Hannah Montgomery, Mark Meyer, Erik Maloney, Emily Youree, Bailey Fernandez, Katherine Stein, Caroline Willard, Heidi Hannoush, Garland Rieman, Kaitlyn Dang, and Mikalya Goss. Other photographs were contributed by faculty members and alumni.

The DLC Lab launched in 2018 under the leadership of Dr. Courtney Rivard, a Teaching Associate Professor, as a hub for pedagogical innovation and hands-on learning across media.

Talk by Astronaut Candidate and ECL Alumna Zena Cardman

NASA astronaut candidate and English & Comparative Literature alumna Zena Cardman '10 returned to UNC in November to share stories about her career and training for NASA. Cardman graduated from Carolina with a BS in biology, honors in poetry, and minors in marine science, chemistry, and creative writing. She then completed a master's degree in marine science in 2014 and was later selected to join the 2017 Group 22 Astronaut Candidate Class. As a scientist, Cardman values the skills and experience she acquired during her time in the Department of English & Comparative Literature.

Cardman reflected, "I loved having the chance as an undergrad to both be a science major and also go through a creative writing program. What better chance than in college to explore both of those totally disparate interests?"

Cardman sees overlap between the two fields. "Science," she stated, "is all about exploring our world around us...and trying to answer questions about how it all happens. And I also found that writing did the same thing—exploring our world around us...and how we fit into it, how it all works."

She also remarked on how creative writing and science come together in fiction and popular culture. Science fiction, for instance, can

awaken public interest in science. Cardman speculated, "I think having a bunch of space-related movies come out right before the application cycle opened for my class of astronauts is a huge part of why we had so many people apply for this job."

For Cardman, attention to writing is essential in communicating scientific results to a broader public. As Cardman said, "I think a really important part of any science or technological mission is being able to convey how important that is to people who wouldn't otherwise get excited about it."

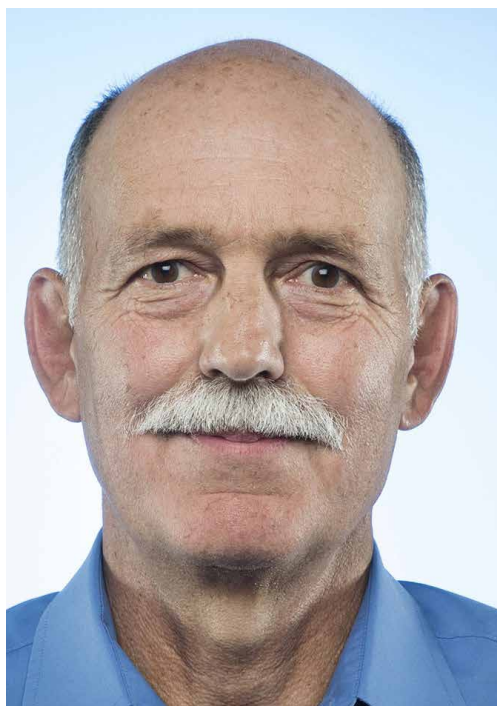
For more information on Cardman and her achievements, read more [here](#) or see [her profile on NASA's website](#). —Caroline Willard and Bailey Fernandez



Zena Cardman '10

David Zucchino Lectures on Wilmington Riots and the Process of Writing

In February, creative writing students enjoyed a lecture from David Zucchino '73, a Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent for *The New York Times* and an alumnus of UNC's School of Journalism. Two classes from the Department of English and Comparative Literature—Professor Bland Simpson's "Introduction to Fiction Writing" and Teaching Assistant Professor Ross White's "Editing and Publishing"—attended the talk.



David Zucchino '73

Zucchino spoke about the process of researching and writing his new book, *Wilmington's Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy*. The book details the Wilmington insurrection of 1898, during which an armed mob of white supremacists overthrew Wilmington's local government, killed at least sixty black citizens, and imposed Jim Crow laws. Zucchino shows that what occurred in 1898 was not a "race riot," as many narratives have claimed, but a carefully orchestrated white supremacist rebellion.

"It was inspiring to see someone take on the responsibility of being the person to help right a wrong, even if they themselves were not a part of that wrong," said Deborah Gardner, one of the students present for the lecture. Anissa Deol, who also attended, emphasized Zucchino's insistence that the ideas and emotions that spurred the

1898 rebellion remain powerful today. "His book was a segue into that conversation," she said.

Zucchino is a contributing writer for *The New York Times*. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1989 for his reporting from South Africa. He's a four-time Pulitzer Prize finalist for coverage of Lebanon, Africa, inner-city Philadelphia and Iraq. He has reported from more than three dozen countries, most recently from Iraq. He is the author of the books *Thunder Run: The Armored Strike to Capture Baghdad* (2004) and *Myth of the Welfare Queen* (1997). —Heidi Hannoush

Florence Dore Leads Conversation about Southern Fiction and Rock and Roll

Professor and Director of Graduate Studies Dr. Florence Dore gave a reading last spring from her recent book *Novel Sounds: Southern Fiction in the Age of Rock and Roll* (2018) and led a conversation about the entanglement of Southern fiction and rock music at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. Incorporating the spirit of Southern rock and roll into the event, Nashville musician Kevin Gordon performed and participated in the conversation.



Florence Dore

Novel Sounds explores how Southern fiction and the birth of rock and roll in the 1950s “became intertwined and shows how Southern writers turned to rock music and its technologies—tape, radio, vinyl—to develop the ‘rock novel.’” A review in Nashville-based literary publication *Chapter 16* says of Dore’s work: “Threaded throughout the book’s detailed, well-constructed arguments are nuanced imagery and surprising passages, which legendary music journalist Greil Marcus has called the book’s ‘punk-rock ricochets.’ These moments bring the book into the realm of general nonfiction, making *Novel Sounds* a pleasing option for readers who enjoy celebrated music writers like Marcus or Peter Guralnick.”

In addition to *Novel Sounds*, Dore has published extensively on the blues, the rock novel, and literary censorship. She has held fellowships at New York University, the National Humanities Center, and the Institute for Arts and Humanities at UNC, has won grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Dore is on the Steering Committee for Post45, a collective of scholars working on American Literature and Culture since 1945, and was a founding co-editor for the Post45 Book Series at Stanford University Press. She has organized two public conferences on rock and literature—at the National Humanities Center and Carolina Performing Arts in 2016-2017; and, with JD Connor and Amy Hungerford, at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2011—and she is on the Advisory Board for the Institute for Bob Dylan Studies at the University of Tulsa’s Bob Dylan Archive. —*Carly Schnitzler*

Greenlaw Day Celebration 2019

On October 4, the 2019 Greenlaw Day celebrated the forty-ninth anniversary of the opening of Greenlaw Hall, which today houses the Department of English and Comparative Literature. Undergraduates interested in literature and writing flocked to Greenlaw Day, on the first floor of Greenlaw Hall, to learn more about the BA in English and Comparative Literature and to celebrate the history of the department. While learning about the newly redesigned concentrations in English and Comparative Literature and meeting faculty, attendees decorated Greenlaw Hall and received free books.

The building was named after Edwin A. Greenlaw, an English scholar and administrator who taught at UNC from 1913 to 1925. His books included *Selections from Chaucer* (1905), *The Province of Literary History* (1931), and *Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory* (1932). Greenlaw was one of the most prominent figures in the development of the department. He increased the number of faculty from eight to thirty-two and started the process that established UNC's English Department as one of the premier departments in the country.



Beyond the UNC campus, Greenlaw played a pivotal role in larger debates about the role of English in college curricula and the way literary scholarship should be pursued. For Greenlaw, serious literary study amounted to a comprehensive study of civilization: to promote his views, he edited influential anthologies such as *Literature and Life* (1922) and, with his UNC colleague James Holly Hanford, *The Great Tradition* (1919), which offered “Selections from English and American Prose and Poetry, Illustrating the National Ideals of Freedom, Faith, and Conduct.” For more on Greenlaw’s pivotal role in the development of English literary studies as a profession and a discipline, see *Professing Literature*, by Gerald Graff, who refers to the “generation of Greenlaw.” — *Bailey Fernandez and Erik Maloney*

Nan Z. Da Visits for Critical Speaker Series

Dr. Nan Z. Da, Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame, visited the Department of English and Comparative Literature in March as part of the Critical Speaker Series. She delivered a talk entitled “Tracking Devices: *King Lear* and Modern China,” then led a seminar on “Literary Critical Justice.”

Da specializes in nineteenth-century American and Chinese literature, but her work sprawls across many fields and theoretical debates. Da’s scholarship explores global, human phenomena that can only be accessed through literary interpretation. Her articles



Nan C. Da

have appeared in *American Literary History*, *Comparative Literature*, *Critical Inquiry*, *J19*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Signs*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*, among others. With Anahid Nersessian, Associate Professor English at UCLA, Da edits *Thinking Literature*, a series of monographs in literary criticism published by the University of Chicago Press.

Da’s first book, *Intransitive Encounter* (2018), theorizes a form of self-contained cross-culturalism in the context of nineteenth-century Sino-US literary exchanges and, looking forward, proposes a model of future Sino-US relations based on these self-contained exchanges rather than on global conflict or premature celebrations of hybridity. She is currently working on a sequel to *Intransitive Encounter* called *Tracking Devices*. Taking off from Stanley Cavell’s observation that *King Lear*’s Cordelia functions as a “tracking device,” Da seeks to map what literature is good at logging and what literary criticism is good at keeping track of. She is also working on a piece of autobiographical experimental criticism tentatively entitled *That No Harm Will Come to Harmless Things*.

The Critical Speaker Series features innovative scholars from across the literary humanities, showcasing their contributions for the University community and the broader public.

Seventh Jane Austen Summer Program Celebrates "Pride and Prejudice"

"I should like balls infinitely better," says Elizabeth in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, "if they were carried on in a different manner; but there is something insufferably tedious in the usual process of such a meeting. It would surely be much more rational if conversation were made the order of the day." Attendees of the Jane Austen Summer Program (JASP) are likely to find both orders of business. Balancing academic panels with hands-on workshops and its very own Regency Ball, the weekend serves to connect

scholars with the general public in both academic and carnivalesque form.

For its seventh year, the program chose the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, along with its adaptations, for its theme. Some adaptations included as "suggested reading" were the novels *Unmarriageable*, by Soniah Kamal; *Ayesha at Last*, by Uzma Jalaluddin; and *Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors*, by Sonali Dev. All three of these authors gave interviews and Q&As at the event, reflecting the collisions of literature and life that characterize the conference.

The program was cofounded by two of UNC's own English & Comparative Literature faculty: Dr. James Thompson and Dr. Inger Brodey. Thompson has published three books specifically on Austen, and Brodey has published dozens of articles and book essays. Both have given presentations on Austen at



JASP Theater

conferences and at Austen societies around the world. Thompson delivered an address to this summer's event entitled "Why *Pride and Prejudice*?"

Two other professors, Dr. Laurie Langbauer and Dr. Beverly Taylor, have also been involved in JASP from the start and co-lead a discussion group each year as part of the events. Every year, an ENGL 340 class is offered to coincide with the event, and the students in the class present their research to the assembled audience in a poster session. This year's ENGL 340 was taught by Michele Robinson.

English and Comparative Literature graduate students also participated in panels at JASP, including Anne Fertig, Grant Glass, Jane McGrail, Michele Robinson, Emily

Sferra, Sarah Schaefer Walton, and Carlie Wetzel. Their participation ranged from chairing panels to giving their own presentations, which included McGrail's "*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*" and Fertig's analysis of board games based on Austen's novel. Beginning in 2020, Walton will also serve as Associate Director of JASP. The graduate students' production of one of Austen's teenage writings, or juvenilia, is a highlight of JASP. The productions are written and directed by English and Comparative Literature alumnus Dr. Adam McCune. The 2019 play was "Love and Friendship."

Planning is already underway for the Summer 2020 program, entitled "Jane Austen's World." It will take place from June 18–21, and the reading for the 2020 program will be Jane Austen's letters and Claire Tomalin's biography *Jane Austen: A Life*. — *Bailey Fernandez*

Four Win Teaching Awards

Four English and Comparative Literature faculty won University-wide teaching awards in 2020.



Rick Warner, Hilary Edwards Lithgow, Grant Glass, and Travis Alexander

Each year, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill recognizes faculty, staff and students for outstanding teaching at the University Teaching Awards. This year, two faculty from the Department of English and Comparative Literature were honored by the University for their work. The University Committee on Teaching Awards, which oversees the selection process, encouraged students to nominate deserving faculty and graduate teaching assistants for the awards. The committee sought nominations with specific examples that display the nominees' care for students, mentorship or effective use of classroom methods.

Rick Warner, Associate Professor and Kenan Fellow, and Hilary Edwards Lithgow, Teaching Associate Professor and Undergraduate Advisor for English and Comparative Literature, were recognized with the Johnston Teaching Excellence Awards. Ph.D. Candidates Grant Glass and Travis Alexander both received Tanner Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching by Graduate Teaching Assistants.

"Our award winners have the opportunity to change student lives every day," said Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Robert A. Blouin. "These recipients recognize and accept the incredible responsibility to prepare our students to become critical thinkers and problem solvers and inspire them to take on the most important challenges facing society. The winners deserve this important recognition and our thanks for their dedication."

Christopher Armitage Retires

After a Carolina career that has spanned more than fifty years, Dr. Christopher Armitage a Professor specializing in British and Canadian literature, announced his retirement this year.

Armitage received his education around the world, earning a B.A. and an M.A. from Oxford in 1954 and 1958, an M.A. in English and Canadian Literature from the University of Western Ontario in 1964, and a Ph.D. in English from Duke University in 1967. Since joining UNC's faculty in 1967, he has published bibliographies on Louis MacNeice

and Walter Raleigh; collaborated on an anthology of Christian poetry; and edited *Literary and Visual Raleigh* (2013), a collection of essays that re-examine Raleigh's career from a range of disciplinary perspectives. He has also published and presented widely on British and Canadian literature and on pedagogy.



Christopher Armitage

was elected to the UNC Academy of Distinguished Teaching Scholars. He has received the Tanner Award for excellence in undergraduate teaching (2003), the Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching (2009), and the Carolina Women's Leadership Council Award for Mentoring Undergraduates (2015). These honors, among many others, testify to his distinguished record as a teacher-scholar.

From 1973 on, Dr. Armitage accrued a steady stream of teaching awards. From 1986–89, and again from 2005–10, he held the Bowman and Gordon Gray chair for “excellence in inspirational teaching of undergraduates.” From 1995–98, he was appointed the first University Professor of Distinguished Teaching “in recognition of career-long excellence and exceptional ability in teaching of undergraduates.” In 2000, he

From 1980–2004, Dr. Armitage served as founder and director of the UNC Summer School Program at Oxford University. From 1970 to 2004, he directed Summer Study Abroad Programs in Oxford on “Shakespeare and the History of Oxford”; since 2005, he has directed Honors Summer Programs in London and Oxford on “Shakespeare in Performance.” Since 2004, he has served as an Adjunct Professor in the Peace, War, and Defense program. His service to the department and the university has been rich and varied. We are indebted to his many years of research, teaching, service, and dedication to the department and wish him the happiest of retirements. —*Erik Maloney*

Bland Simpson Co-teaches Seminar on Coastal Ecology

Last semester, Bland Simpson, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, and Dr. Brent McKee, Professor of Department of Marine Sciences, offered a new interdisciplinary class last semester entitled “The Changing Coasts of Carolina.” The course took students into the field to conduct hands-on research in the coastal ecosystems of North Carolina. “The opportunity to put hard science and creative writing together and put the focus on our magnificent coastal plain,” said Simpson, “is really one of the thrills of a lifetime of teaching.”



Bland Simpson

of science and the public humanities. “You need science to help explain the world, but without writing, you can’t express your research,” said Blythe Gulley, a student in the course and an English and Comparative Literature major.

The class, cross-listed as English 473 and Marine Sciences 473, sought, in McKee’s words, to “foster a generation of young writers who are honing their skills in creative writing but write on environmental issues, especially coastal issues.” The course cultivated rigorous and socially effective modes of writing by melding methods of the environmental sciences with creative writing’s communicative ability to reach a wider audience.

Joining these two perspectives helped students who primarily identified as creative writers to express their interest in ecology more precisely, while giving young scientists the rhetorical tools they needed to communicate the results of their research. The course thus encouraged the public expression

For footage of the course and more perspectives from its instructors and students, see the [course video](#). Also, check out [the post on the class by the marine sciences department](#). — *Bailey Fernandez and Erik Maloney*

Pam Durban Retires

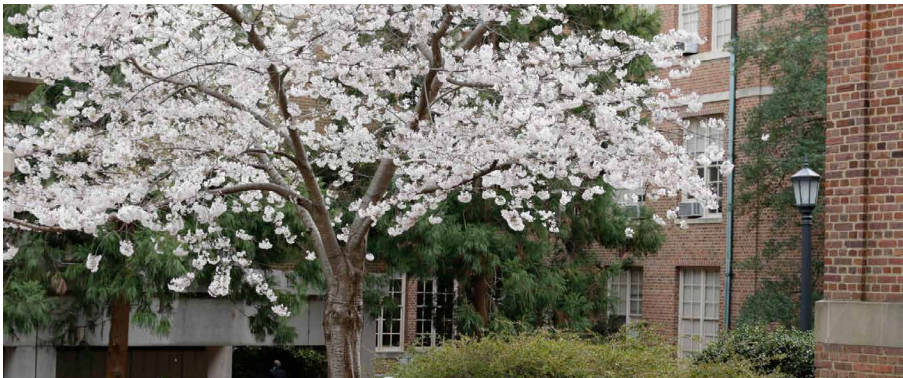
Pam Durban, the Doris Betts Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, has retired from teaching to focus on her own writing. She graduated from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and earned an MFA from the University of Iowa in 1979. Before joining Carolina's faculty in 2001, she taught at SUNY Geneseo, Murray State University, Ohio University, and, from 1986 to 2001, Georgia State University.

Her work has been widely published in literary magazines and anthologized in *Best of the South* and *The Best American Short Stories of the Century*. She has written several acclaimed short story collections and novels, including *All Set About with Fever Trees and Other Stories* (1985), *The Laughing Place* (1993), *So Far Back* (2001), *The Tree of Forgetfulness* (2001), and *Soon: Stories* (2015). In 1996, she served as founding co-editor of the acclaimed literary journal *Five Points*.

Durban's writing has garnered numerous literary honors, including the Rinehart Award for Fiction, the Townsend Prize for Fiction, a Whiting Award, and the Lillian Smith Book Award. In 2015, she received the Sir Walter Raleigh Award for fiction, given for the year's best book of fiction written by a North Carolinian, for her collection *Soon*.

"When I look back through the journal I kept my last year of college, it's filled with quotes from Pam Durban," said Hannah Thurman '11. "They are both wry ('If you want to witness something amazing, go to Costco to watch the changing of the rotisserie chicken') and practical ('When you're serious about something, you'll wake up each morning and work on it for two hours')—two traits that truly encapsulate the gifts she gave her writing classes. Although she herself is a talented writer, she always centered her lessons on process, not prodigy. 'It's not genius,' she said, as the rest of us scribbled. 'It's just work.'"

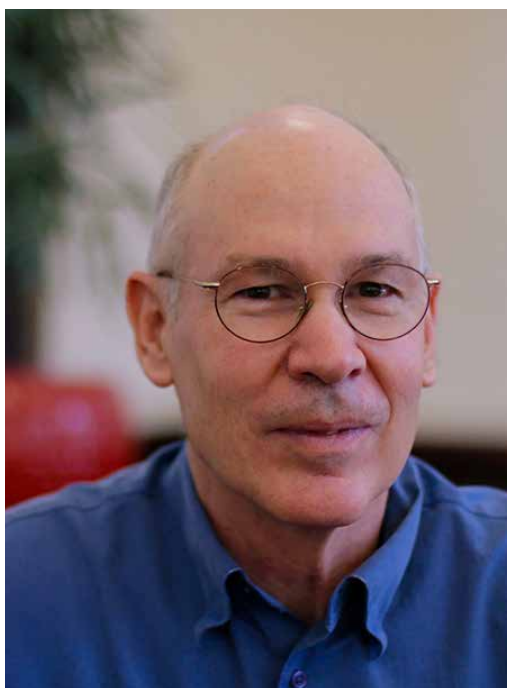
We are indebted to her remarkable literary production and to her many years of teaching and service in the department, and we wish her the happiest of retirements.
—Erik Maloney



John McGowan Retires

Dr. John McGowan, the John W. and Anna H. Hanes Distinguished Professor, will retire at the end of the year. He earned an AB from Georgetown University in 1974 and a PhD in English from SUNY Buffalo in 1978. After teaching at the University of San Francisco, the University of Michigan, and Stanford University, among others, he joined UNC's faculty in 1992. From 1996–99, he served as the first Director of the Graduate School's Royster Society of Fellows. From 2006–14, he served as Ruel W. Tyson Jr. Distinguished Professor of the Humanities and as Director of UNC's Institute for the Arts and Humanities. He has taught widely in the department and in the Program for Cultural Studies, of which he is a founding member, offering courses in literary theory, aesthetics, Victorian literature, modernism, and political philosophy.

Dr. McGowan's scholarly work draws broadly on philosophy, political theory, and literary studies. His first book, *Representation and Revelation: Victorian Realism from Carlyle to Yeats* (1986), studies ideas and practices of representation in seven Victorian writers. *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (1991) explores the work of major postmodern thinkers and offers an alternative political vision grounded in a theory of democracy. Two books on Hannah Arendt—*Hannah Arendt: An Introduction* (1998) and *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics* (1997), coedited with Craig Calhoun—continue to examine democratic theory. Over three editions since 2001, Dr. McGowan has served as one of the editors of the monumental *Norton*



John McGowan

Anthology of Theory and Criticism (2001–18). *Democracy's Children: Intellectuals and the Rise of Cultural Politics* (2002) collects essays on the changing roles of intellectuals and universities. In *American Liberalism: An Interpretation for Our Times* (2007), he offers a vision of liberalism, grounded in James Madison and John Dewey, to animate contemporary American politics. *Pragmatist Politics: Making the Case for Liberal Democracy* (2012) uses pragmatism—particularly the work of Dewey, William James, and Kenneth Burke—to formulate a theory of liberal democracy suitable for the present.

McGowan is widely regarded across the university and beyond as an intellectual role model and a tireless activist committed to the principles he articulates in his work. We are grateful for his many years of dedication and wish him the happiest of retirements.
—Erik Maloney

Two Interviewed on IAH Podcast

Two members of the English & Comparative Literature appeared on the podcast produced by the Institute for the Arts and Humanities. Assistant Professor Dr. Danielle Christmas had a lot to say on her September podcast, titled “Examining the Literature of Hate,” where she was interviewed about recent research on religious slave narratives and the literary culture of white nationalism. In October, Teaching Associate Professor Michael Keenan Gutierrez and anthropology professor Caela O’Connell visited the podcast to discuss their projects’ relationships to climate change.

A discussion of white nationalism is bound to attract attention, and Christmas stresses the urgency of confronting this topic: “I think it is emotionally difficult to admit that there is something so seductive about hate discourse....These are people that we know; these are people we are running into. This is no longer fringe—it is becoming mainstream.” Analyzing the literary culture of a movement with such a widespread and nefarious influence thus becomes extraordinarily pressing.

Christmas also received a shout-out at UNC’s New Student Convocation, where Interim Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz stated: “Danielle Christmas in the English department researches how slavery and the Holocaust affect socioeconomic discourse, and she will teach you how to write.”

Discussing climate change has communal implications. As Gutierrez says in his podcast, “One of the things art can do is help the audience imagine something they find difficult to imagine.” For him, this has manifested in the creation of a novel set in an imaginary town devastated by ecological disaster. From there, one can imagine the choices that people might make and the problems that may arise, and potentially offer a warning about the darkness of a future ravaged by ecological collapse.

Gutierrez has been widely published in outlets such as *The Guardian*, *The Delmarva Review*, *The Pisgah Review*, and *The Boiler*. In his previous book, *The Trench Angel*, a historical novel set in 1919 Colorado, a traumatized photographer must come to terms with his experiences of trench warfare in World War I.



Danielle Christmas



Michael Keenan Gutierrez

Listen to Christmas’s podcast or **listen to Gutierrez’s podcast**. —Bailey Fernandez and Erik Maloney

HHIVE Lab Researchers Find Dance Can Help People Manage Chronic Illness

Can dance help people struggling with chronic illness? After a visit to the Health and Humanities Interdisciplinary Venue for Exploration (HHIVE Lab), Chancellor's Science Scholar Maebelle Mathew '19 was determined to find out.



Maebelle Mathew '19

Mathew, inspired by Dr. Jordynn Jack's project, Writing Diabetes, and her own dancing experience, researched the effects of dance on diabetes. Supported by the Office for Undergraduate Research and friends from her dance group, Mathew organized her own project, Diabetes and Dance. Over the course of eight weeks of dance workshops, she and her team taught contemporary dance, Latin, Bollywood, and Zumba to people with diabetes at a local senior center.

According to Emilie Poplett's [article](#) on the UNC website, "Although the study was small, the results were promising." Participants reported an increase in self-esteem and coping ability, and some even saw their glucose levels decrease by the end of the eight weeks.

Mathew and her team may have graduated—Mathew is now in medical school—but they plan to continue this program as a student organization at UNC-Chapel Hill to offer dance workshops and social support to anyone struggling with a chronic illness.

Read more about Mathew and her project [here](#).

Wallace in Garden and Gun

The February–March issue of *Garden and Gun* includes "A Southern Family Portrait" written and illustrated by Professor Daniel Wallace. Wallace accompanies caricature



portraits of his relatives with incisive captions. Read about Jerome, "fifth cousin twice removed," who "told everyone he was an ornithologist, but really...just liked to watch birds"; the sisters Emily and Patricia, "Ouija board aficionados"; and Rudy, "almost certainly a dog."

[The piece is also available online.](#)
—Erik Maloney

Daniel Wallace

UNC Spotlights Scottish Heritage with Gaelic Studies Symposium

Last year, UNC inaugurated the Scottish Heritage USA Visiting Lectureship. This year, students with an interest in oral history, folklore, and endangered languages attended October's Scottish Gaelic Studies Symposium. The event featured lectures from Kate Forbes, the Scottish Government's Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy, and Rob Dunbar, Chair of Celtic Languages, Literature, History, and Antiquities at the University of Edinburgh.

Nearly sixty thousand people still speak Scottish Gaelic today in Scotland and parts of Nova Scotia. Today, it is classified as a minority indigenous language of the United Kingdom by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Although only a small percentage of Scots speak Gaelic today, it still maintains a vibrant culture as well as its own publishing industry, radio and television stations, and international music scene.

In 2018, the Scottish Heritage USA (SHUSA) Visiting Lectureship chose Tiber F. M. Falzett as its inaugural holder. Since coming to UNC, he has taught courses on Celtic history and folklore both locally and in diaspora. North Carolinians may find this diasporic heritage particularly relevant, as many of the state's earliest settlers were Scottish, and quite a few spoke Gaelic. The Lectureship has so far coordinated several public events, including a lecture on the Celtic origins of Halloween, a *ceilidh* (visit) for Abigail Washburn, a milling frolic at the Outlandish Hillsborough festival, and a Gaelic coffee hour to teach students the language.



Tiber F. M. Falzett

SHUSA and UNC are currently fundraising to create a permanent chair in this position. To learn more, visit give.unc.edu. —Bailey Fernandez and Anne Fertig

Graduate Student News



Jane McGrail

Jane McGrail and Emily Sferra Named Humanities for the Public Good Fellows

Congratulations to Jane McGrail and Emily Sferra for being named 2019–20 Humanities for the Public Good Fellows.

As the PlayMakers Fellow, Emily will assist in the coordination of the Thomas Wolfe International Playwrighting Competition. To honor one hundred years of playmaking at Carolina, PlayMakers Repertory Company has solicited playwrights, dramaturges, writers' collectives, and literary agents to submit for consideration unproduced scripts that speak to the legacy of two of UNC and the nation's most illustrious writers, Paul Green and Thomas Wolfe. Emily will also work with PRC to launch the 21st-Century Folk Play Festival in the spring of 2020.

Jane will be working with Carolina K–12, a program administered by UNC's Carolina Public Humanities that seeks to make the university's resources available to K–12 educators throughout the state. —*Erik Maloney*



Emily Sferra

Ph.D. Candidate Eddie Moore Wins Inaugural J. Lee Greene Award

In honor of Dr. Johnny Lee Greene, the Department of English and Comparative Literature at UNC Chapel Hill established the J. Lee Greene Award: for Excellence in Postgraduate Work on Race and Ethnicity.

The J. Lee Greene Award: for Excellence in Postgraduate Work on Race and Ethnicity was awarded for the first time at the graduate students awards ceremony in Spring 2019. After a moving tribute to Dr. Greene by Dr. Heidi Kim and Dr. Leslie Frost, Eddie Moore received the first J. Lee Greene Award.



Eddie Moore

Moore's research focuses on fictional representations of illness in black queer men, particularly in the novels of James Baldwin, Randall Kenan, and Samuel Delany. Moore notes, "An important aspect of my work links the

condition of the black queer body to the body politics of the nation-state. That is to say, the black queer body is one historically marginalized among multiple communities. It is policed, pathologized, criminalized, deemed anti-black and anti-American, and is subject to erasure, in ways that I argue are productive of various modes of black queer ‘dis-ease.’” He is interested in “the various ways the comparatively limited canon of black queer fiction helps us to understand black and black queer social experience, black somatic and noetic vulnerability, and the importance of both national and local ‘belonging’ to wellness.”

“I am extremely honored to have received the inaugural J. Lee Greene Award,” Moore says. “Professor Greene and his work are highly respected, and it means quite a bit to have my own work considered deserving of recognition under the name of someone so warmly regarded by all who knew him.” He continues, “I am certainly inspired by the scholarly legacy of Dr. Greene and others who laid the foundation for the work that many of us do today... I can only hope that some day I am fortunate enough to make such an impact on others.”

Moore also notes the importance of the new award, “I am also very excited that our department has instituted this award as a way to continue recognizing students who do work on race and ethnicity, and I can’t think of a better eponym!”

The J. Lee Greene Award: for Excellence in Postgraduate Work on Race and Ethnicity will be awarded yearly during the Graduate Student Awards.

Rachel Warner Wins Paul Green Prize

Rachel Warner, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, has won the inaugural Paul Green Prize from the *North Carolina Literary Review* for her essay “Zora Neale Hurston in North Carolina: Drama, Education, and Contemporary Activism.” The essay, forthcoming in the journal’s 2020 issue, excavates the time that Hurston, author of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), spent in North Carolina. During that time, she founded a drama department at the North Carolina College for Negroes (now North Carolina Central University) and took classes with playwright Paul Green.



Rachel Warner

In her work, Warner collaborated with the special collections staff at the Wilson Library. There, she discovered Green’s audio recordings recounting Hurston’s time as a member of his playwrighting group. Warner discusses how Green “relates Hurston’s signature flamboyance and refusal to be intimidated by the white student body and details his interest in learning more about Hurston’s particular point of view as a black playwright.”

As Warner relates, “the archival material documents not only Hurston and Green’s shared passion for the folk



Anne Fertig

theater but also how they worked together to promote a sense of the richness of Black history, culture, and traditions at a time [and place] featuring profound efforts at dehumanizing Southern African Americans and denying their place in the Southern artistic tradition.”

For our full interview with her, click [here](#). —Bailey Fernandez

Ph.D. Students Awarded 2019 Humanities Professional Pathway Fellowship



Sarah Schaefer Walton

Ph.D. students Anne Fertig and Sarah Schaefer Walton earned Humanities Professional Pathway Fellowships, which award \$5,000 in summer support, from the College of Arts and Sciences, the Humanities for the Public Good Initiative, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Walton plans to use her Humanities Professional Pathway Fellowship to produce an NEH Digital Advancement Grant application in hopes of being awarded start-up funding for a digital humanities project she calls “Jane Austen’s Desk.” “Jane Austen’s Desk” would be a public-facing website providing a window into Austen’s world and a space for fans and scholars around the world to connect, collaborate, and learn. Riffing on J.K. Rowling’s

personal website, which mimics the surface of her desk as the backdrop, “Jane Austen’s Desk” would use Austen’s writing desk, located at the Jane Austen House Museum in Hampshire, as an interactive conceit for hosting historical and literary material. Walton plans to work with the Jane Austen Summer Program (JASP), an award-winning local nonprofit organization which hosts an annual symposium for Austen scholars and enthusiasts, in order to produce the website.

Walton wants to extend the work JASP is doing to a more global audience, saying that “whereas much of Austen-related media or experience is cost prohibitive or geographically specific ... a website offers no such restrictions.” On her excitement about this project, Walton remarks, “As a member of the JASP team, I hope that ‘Jane Austen’s Desk’ will dramatically expand JASP’s community mission and secure its position as one of the leading Austen scholarly organizations. As a Janeite, I simply love the idea of sharing a piece of Austen’s world.”

Fertig, another Austen scholar, is using her Humanities Professional Pathway Fellowship to start Austen and Company, a free public book series on female authors contemporaneous with Austen, in partnership with Durham County Library and JASP. “The idea,” Fertig states, “is to encourage the public to read other historical women

writers,” such as Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Phillis Wheatley. Each event in the series will feature a short talk by a UNC graduate student before breaking into public discussion and activities. Rather than lectures, these events will be reading groups designed to give people an opportunity to discuss these novels.

Fertig hopes to increase awareness of women writers and public engagement with historical literature. “Many of these writers,” she remarks, “have historical and critical significance, but they are rarely read outside of the academy. We hope to encourage our community not just to read these authors but to engage in discourse about their works.” Austen and Company has already hosted one event, “Games and Play in Austen’s England,” at the South Regional Library in Durham. Participants discussed the importance of gaming in Austen’s novels and learned how to play whist, spillikins, and other historical games. Fertig reports, “Our feedback showed that people were extremely interested in both the historical and literary angles—and they wanted to learn more about the literary side of the topic!” According to Austen and Company’s [Facebook page](#), the next event will take place in October.

Walton and Fertig are delighted to be able to use these awards to broaden and deepen public access to new dimensions of historical women’s writing. —*Hannah Montgomery*

English Graduate Student James Cobb Celebrated by University Office for Diversity & Inclusion

James Cobb, a graduate student in the department of English and Comparative Literature, was recently featured in a Diversity Spotlight by the University Office for Diversity & Inclusion. Cobb currently serves as the graduate student representative for the English and Comparative Literature department’s Diversity & Inclusion Committee. Created in 2017, the committee advises faculty hires in the department and manages numerous projects to diversify and improve the climate of the department. As the graduate student representative on the committee, Cobb works on rethinking the department’s hiring practices, graduate funding, and other aspects of graduate student life. Professor Gabrielle Calvocoressi, the department diversity liaison, says of Cobb, “in everything he does, James works to not only increase diversity on the campus, but to deepen the notion of what diversity and inclusion means in the classroom and in the world.”

Reflecting on how his life experience has contributed to his current work in the committee, Cobb says “[growing up,] I was not openly discriminated against, but looking around the class and not seeing any black faces for the better part of nine years reveals the spaces in which Blacks are and are not welcome.” He continues, noting, “I also existed on the other side



James Cobb

of this line. Sports were a space in which a certain type of blackness was expected, but my friends on the team lived different lives and came from exceedingly different backgrounds.” This experience has informed Cobb’s understanding of the nature of diversity. He notes that “I understand a person as not adherent to a particular category.”

This perspective on diversity has influenced Cobb’s initiatives within the department. When asked about how the department’s faculty and curriculum could be improved to increase diversity, Cobb identified diversity of faculty members as a key component of improving the diversity of the department. He notes that ensuring that higher education includes a diverse group of people encourages more diversity in the students who pursue careers in academia. Reflecting on his time in college and graduate school, he says “as a college student, I had no close connections to a professor of color. I only knew that I loved to analyze texts because they revealed something to me about the world. Working at UNC with GerShun Avilez has made the reality of being a scholar less abstract.” By promoting a faculty of diverse scholars, Cobb believes that the department can help further such connections between the faculty and student body.

In the undergraduate courses that he teaches, Cobb also strives for an ever-increasing diversity of authors, aiming to include not only writers of color but also female and LGBTQ authors. In fall 2017, he taught Intro to Fiction, which allowed him to design his own syllabus from scratch. When asked about his own curriculum development, Cobb commented on creating the class reading list, saying “though there is a lot to be gleaned through canonical works, it is equally important to understand the limitations of these works and how subsequent writers reveal these limitations. I wanted my students to understand that even the most heralded writers and works of fiction can be problematic.” This critical view of the reception of literature is in keeping with the spirit of inclusion and community that Cobb promotes in all of his work on campus.

—*Emma Duvall*

Graduate Students Recognized for Excellence

This August, attendees of the Department of English and Comparative Literature’s annual Welcome Reception were treated to high festivities as the department welcomed new faculty, staff, and graduate students and dispensed awards for outstanding achievements over the past year.

The Doris Betts Award, the Earl Hartsell Award, and the James R. Gaskin Award were presented to Eric Bontempo, Tyler Bunzey, and Sarah Schaefer Walton for excellence in teaching composition. The winners of the C. S. Herschel Awards for Course Design were Jen Boehm, Grant Glass, Jared Powell, Jordan Schroeder, and Carlie Wetzel. The Peer Mentoring Committee teaching awards celebrated Nora Augustine (who also received the Krista Turner Memorial Award for Teaching Excellence), Michael Clark, Anne Fertig, Mary Learner, Eddie Moore, and April Munroe. The Diane R. Leonard Award for Foreign Language Instruction was presented to Che Sokol, and Jared Powell earned the Ruth Rose Richardson Award for the Outstanding Record in the First Year of Graduate Study. —*Erik Maloney*

UNC Graduate Students Lead Inaugural Veterans Writing Workshop

The inaugural UNC Veterans Writing Workshop began in April with a panel discussion led by four veterans discussing the ways in which American popular culture has impacted the divide between the military and civilians. The panelists were Joe Kassabian (author of *The Hooligans of Kandahar*), Eric Burke (Civil War historian and enlisted infantryman in Afghanistan and Iraq), Kate Dahlstrand (Civil War and Reconstruction historian, Director of University of Georgia's Student Veteran Oral History Project, and a Global War on Terrorism enlisted combat vet), and Michelle Moyd (East African military historian and former United States Air Force officer). The writing workshop consisted of exercises and activities encouraging participants to work

on their stories with trained facilitators providing assistance with the specific skills involved in generating, shaping, and revising a narrative.



Paul Blom

Davis Winkie (Ph.D. student, soldier in the NC Army National Guard and co-organizer of the event) was inspired by a course project while working on his Ph.D. program in military history. Winkie emphasized the idea of the “civ-mil divide,” the disconnect between servicemembers and other members of society. “American popular culture has a tendency to portray all servicemembers and veterans as trigger pullers doing heroic things,” says Winkie. “This event aims to push back on this reality from one end by having a panel of veterans discuss the impact of popular narratives of war on their military experience” as well as provide local veterans with a venue to voice their own stories.



Davis Winkie

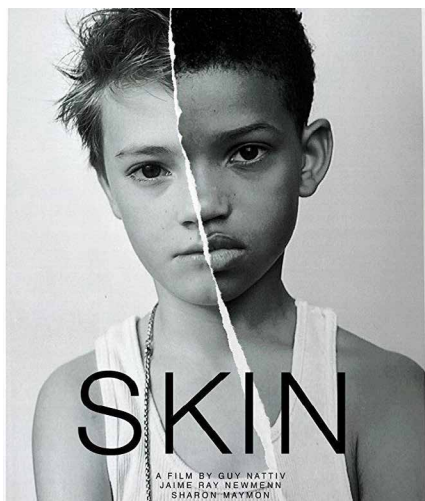
Paul Blom, a Ph.D. student in English and Comparative Literature and co-organizer of the event, hopes that members of the public will learn about the diversity in military experiences, that “no two people’s military experiences are exactly the same.” The goal is to demonstrate that each veteran “has a unique voice that deserves to be heard,” says Blom. —*Halynna Snyder*

Alumni News

Andrew Carlberg on his Oscar-Winning Short Film, *Skin*

At the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, UNC alumnus Andrew Carlberg '07 held a trophy aloft in celebration on stage at the 91st annual Academy Awards. He had just accepted his Oscar for the short film he produced, *Skin* (2018), directed by Guy Nattiv, which won the Oscar for Best Live Action Short Film. "It was crazy. I've watched the Oscars every year since I was probably in third grade. It definitely was very surreal," Carlberg said, reflecting on the experience. "At the end of the day there were only 15 movie titles that have an Oscar associated with them this year and it's the highest honor and the most exciting thing to be one of those."

Skin is a short film that follows a young boy who has an innocent encounter with a black man at a supermarket. His white supremacist parents react to the exchange with racial violence, and the two families "find themselves in a clash with shocking consequences." Carlberg has produced over thirty films, shorts, and television series since 2009, including two films and two shorts that are currently in production. His other best known work includes, *The Bridge Partner* (2015), *Dirty Weekend* (2015), and *A Place in the Caribbean* (2017). Carlberg says of his career, "I'm a producer with a capital P. I'm a very active, involved producer." His job varies from project to project, "Sometimes it starts with finding the source material, it involves casting the project, raising money for the project, building the crew for the project... making sure the production happens."



courtesy Fox Searchlight Pictures

Carlberg credits his success in part to the skills he learn as an English Major at UNC. "My English degree has served me better than I could ever imagine in the entertainment industry." A background in English helped Carlberg "not just in terms of understanding story, but being able to communicate and process knowledge." He explained that the English major and literature more broadly gave him the "power to empathize with others" and "decipher the world." Carlberg advises undergraduates, "College is teaching you how to think, and English does that extraordinarily well.... No matter where you're looking for your career to go afterwards, it's a major that [can] connect."

Carlberg's upcoming productions include *The Last Weekend in May*, *Date*, *Exile*, and *The Pleasure of Your Presence*. Watch his Oscar-winning short film *Skin* [here](#). — Hannah Montgomery

Anthony King Nominated for Tony Award

Anthony King '97 may be best known for writing television shows like *Silicon Valley*, *Broad City*, and *Dead to Me*, but Broadway has taken notice. With his writing partner Scott Brown, King was recognized for his work on the hit show *Beetlejuice* with a nomination for the 2019 Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical.



Anthony King (right) with writing partner Scott Brown at the 2020 Tony Awards

King already has two Primetime Emmy nominations to his name for his contributions to *Night of Too Many Stars: An Overbooked Concert for Autism Education* (2010) and *Silicon Valley* (2014). But live theater has long been a passion for King, who directed shows for Company Carolina and Lab! Theater as an undergraduate. “Theater has always been my No. 1 love, so a Tony nomination is the biggest thrill possible. If I could tell teenage me that this is happening, I would slap myself in disbelief,” King told Kathy Henderson of *Broadway Direct* shortly after the nominations were announced. Prior to writing the book for *Beetlejuice*, King and Brown co-wrote *Gutenberg! The Musical!*, which became a hit Off-Broadway.

When asked about how studying creative writing at Carolina has influenced his career trajectory, King said, “I didn’t think I’d have a career as a writer when I came to Carolina. Even when I left, I wasn’t sure it was possible. But at Carolina, I learned how to think like a writer. That’s what a degree in English gives you. It changes the way you think. And, let’s face it, it makes you a better person.”

In addition to writing for television and the stage, King has served as the Artistic Director of the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre in New York City and has acted in the HBO series *Crashing* and alongside Donald Glover in the film *Mystery Team*. Other writing credits include the television shows *Best Friends Forever*, *Playing House*, *Wrecked*, *Search Party*, and *Wet Hot American Summer: Ten Years Later*. He lives in Burbank, CA with his wife, writer Kate Spencer, and daughters. —Ross White

David B. Woronoff Inducted into the NC Media and Journalism Hall of Fame

David B. Woronoff '88 was one of the five honorees inducted into the NC Media and Journalism Hall of Fame during a ceremony on April 12, 2019. The NC Media and Journalism Hall of Fame honors "exceptional leaders with ties to North Carolina who demonstrate leadership in their spheres of influence; service to the professions and society; performance exemplifying the highest professional standards; and commitment to inspiring and advancing young people in media and journalism careers." Woronoff, president and publisher of *The Pilot* of Southern Pines, graduated from UNC Chapel Hill with a bachelor's degree in English.

Woronoff began his career in journalism at the *News & Observer* in Raleigh, NC after his graduation from Chapel Hill. He went on to work at *Greenville News* in South Carolina and *The Anniston Star* in Alabama. Woronoff is now the president and publisher of *The Pilot*, a twice-weekly local newspaper in Southern Pines that has grown into a statewide media company. *The Pilot* publishes four regional magazines: *O. Henry* and *Seasons* in Greensboro, *Salt* in Wilmington, and *Pinestraw* in the Sandhills. The *Pilot* also publishes *Business North Carolina*, a business magazine focusing on unique aspects of North Carolina's thriving economy. The company also owns The Country Bookshop, a 65 year old bookstore in Southern Pines.



David B. Woronoff

Woronoff has received numerous awards for his extensive work in local news. He was the first community newspaper publisher appointed to the Southern Newspaper Association's board of directors and in 2009, he was named the president of the North Carolina Press Association. *The Pilot* was named the best community newspaper in the nation twice by the Inland Press Association, and three times by the National Newspaper Association. —*Halynna Snyder*

Patrick Dougherty Exhibits Installation at Ackland

Outside the Ackland Art Museum this August, passersby might have noticed towering, kettle-like sculptures presiding over the entrance. These figures composed an installation known as *Step Right Up*, the first large-scale site-specific installation commissioned by the museum in almost two decades and the product of the hard work of UNC Department of English and Comparative Literature's alumnus Patrick Dougherty '67.



Patrick Dougherty

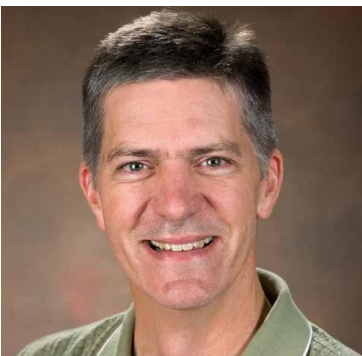
After beginning his career by studying in our English department, Dougherty later returned to the university to study sculpture and art history. His work most frequently consists of large-scale sculptures constructed from natural materials. *Step Right Up*, continuing this trend, comprises five immense jugs built from locally harvested tree saplings in a process Dougherty calls “stickwork.” Assembled with the assistance of

almost two hundred volunteers, these structures—big enough for viewers to walk inside—exemplified the environmental art that has made Dougherty famous, a body of work that has earned him multiple awards and grants including a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship.

Fans of “land artists” such as Michael Heizer may see a similarity between these “stickworks” and installations like Heizer’s *Double Negative* and *Levitated Mass*. These structures not only express the creativity of the artist but also alter and become part of the surrounding landscape. Likewise, Dougherty’s sculptures include the materials of their region and reflect the surrounding area.

The installation was taken down on August 31, but you can follow Dougherty’s work [on his website](#) and keep up with the Ackland Art Museum’s programming [here](#). — Bailey Fernandez, *photo by Audrey Shore*

Jim Hood Named to Endowed Professorship at Guilford



Jim Hood

On April 1, 2019 Guilford College named Jim Hood (Ph.D., 1991) as a Charles A. Dana endowed professor. Jim has taught nineteenth-century British literature, American nature writing, and courses on literature and ethics and natural history accounts of North Carolina at Guilford since 1999. He has served the college as associate academic dean, director of study abroad, department and division chair, and clerk of the faculty. His publications include *Divining Desire: Tennyson and the Poetics of Transcendence* (Ashgate, 2000), *The Ecology of Quaker Meeting* (Pendle Hill, 2018), and articles on early Victorian gift books.

Alumni Noted as Classic North Carolina Writers

Writing for Raleigh's WRAL, Jason Jeffries of Quail Ridge Books has compiled a list of ten classic novels by North Carolina writers. Fully half of these books were written by UNC alumni. The novels penned by alumni include *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier '73, *Ellen Foster* by Kaye Gibbons, *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead* by Randall Kenan '85, *Life after Life* by Jill McCorkle '80, and *Big Fish* by Daniel Wallace '08. All of these writers received degrees from the Department of English and Comparative Literature, and Kenan and Wallace are current English and Comparative Literature faculty.

Continuing the tradition of UNC alumnus Thomas Wolfe, these writers have elevated the language of the South and raised the profile of Southern literature. These novels have earned awards from organizations as diverse as the National Book Award, *The New York Times*, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the National Book Critics' Circle, and the Ernest Hemingway Foundation.

Two of these novels have been adapted into highly successful Hollywood films: Frazier's *Cold Mountain* (directed by Anthony Minghella and starring Jude Law, Nicole Kidman, and Renee Zellweger); and Wallace's *Big Fish* (directed by Tim Burton and starring Ewan McGregor, Albert Finney, Billy Crudup, Jessica Lange, and Marion Cotillard).

Ashley Harris Publishes Poetry Chapbook Exploring Race and Racism Through *The Legend of Zelda*

UNC Chapel Hill alumna Ashley Harris '15 recently published her first chapbook of poetry, *If the Hero of Time Was Black* (Weasel Press, 2018). Blending observations about race in America with pop culture, *If the Hero of Time Was Black* uses the video game *The Legend of Zelda* to explore racism both within and through this popular video game. In a 2017 interview with *Cartridge Lit*, Harris asks, "...what would a black hero look like?" and answers herself saying, "That's why I wrote my book." The poems in her chapbook address the lack of representation and consideration for people of color in video game design, while also using *The Legend of Zelda* as a lens through which to view contemporary society. Many of the poems in the collection maintain this dual perspective, simultaneously looking into the world of *The Legend of Zelda* from the outside and considering the game itself as a character in the chapbook. As Sherayah Witcher of Thurston Howl Publications notes, "Harris not only explores the issues of race, but she directly addresses players of the game and implores them not to ignore striking similarities between the real and virtual worlds."

Harris graduated from UNC Chapel Hill with a double major in Chemistry and Hispanic Literatures



Ashley Harris

and Cultures, and a minor in Creative Writing. She states that she “aspires to be both a physician and a poet,” and “spends her time trying to turn medicine into poetry.” Reflecting on her time in the creative writing program at UNC, Harris notes “My studies at UNC in Creative Writing...reminded me that my sole purpose of writing was not just for audiences or scores, but for me. I was able to learn how I wanted to put my perspective and story together.”

Harris’ next project, a longer length work of poetry called *Notes on the State of Virginia*, brings together her interest in medicine and poetry. Harris says “This book will be more focused on how I was raised in Virginia, and the generation of women in my family raised there. There will also be reference to scientific, cultural and medical racism. I was born in Prince Edward County, Virginia, a place where integration was difficult, and medical experimentation thrived up until post reconstruction. [The project] will also very much serve to mock and ridicule Thomas Jefferson, as I am not one who believes that the dead who oppress should be allowed to rest.”

After graduating from UNC, Harris won the Gerard Unks Fellowship Grant, which allowed her to travel to England and Panama to study the art and poetry of each place. Her poetry has been published in *Event Horizon*, *Wusgood.black* and the *Yellow Chair Review*, and her short story “Black Wall Street” was published in the bilingual magazine *Agua de Pozo*. Currently, she is working with youths in creative writing workshops and runs a monthly open mic series through her poetry collective, Hear&After, at Flyleaf Books in Chapel Hill. —Emma Duvall

Alumni Honored at University Day Celebration

Two of the four Distinguished Alumni honored on October 12 as part of UNC’s University Day celebration—Jill C. McCorkle ’80 and Robert D. Newman ’82—are graduates of the Department of English and Comparative Literature.

Jill C. McCorkle, an acclaimed novelist and short story writer, received a B.A. in Creative Writing in 1980. *The New York Times* has chosen five of her works as “Notable Books,” and several of her short stories have been featured in *Best American Short Stories*. Her awards and honors include the New England Book Award, the North Carolina Award for Literature, and the Thomas Wolfe Prize. She has taught at UNC, Harvard, Tufts, and Brandeis, and is currently teaching creative writing at North Carolina State University. In 2018, she was inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame.

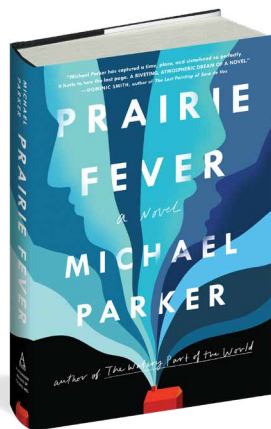
Dr. Robert D. Newman, who earned his Ph.D. in English in 1982, is president and director of the National Humanities Center. He has previously served as dean of humanities and professor of English at the University of Utah, and he has published six books and many articles on twentieth-century literature and culture, writing extensively on authors such as James Joyce and Thomas Pynchon. He is also the general editor of the “Cultural Frames, Framing Culture” series, published by the University of Virginia Press.

Michael Parker Publishes Seventh Novel

In his seventh novel, *Prairie Fever* (2019), Michael Parker '84 explores the tense dynamic between two sisters in the hardscrabble hardscrabble landscape of early 1900s Oklahoma.

For Parker, the novel is a return to a story in his most recent collection of short stories, *Everything, Then and Since* (2017). Though he thought he had finished with the story of the two sisters when that collection was published, he found that they wouldn't leave him alone, prompting a deeper dive into their relationship. This isn't the first time a story has lingered in Parker's imagination—a story in 2007's *Don't Make Me Stop Now* eventually spawned the novel *The Watery Part of the World* in 2011.

Parker's other novels include *Hello Down There* (1993), *Towns Without Rivers* (2001), *Virginia Lovers* (2004), *If You Want Me To Stay* (2005), and *All I Have In This World* (2014). His first story collection, *The Geographical Cure*, was released in 1994, and his short fiction and nonfiction have appeared in various journals including *Five Points*, *The Southwest Review*, *Epoch*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Runner's World* and *Men's Journal*. He has received fellowships in fiction from the North Carolina Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as the Hobson Award for Arts and Letters, and the North Carolina Award for Literature.



At Carolina, Parker studied fiction with Lee Smith, Daphne Athas, Marianne Ginger, Louis Rubin, and Max Steele. Parker taught for nearly thirty years in the MFA Writing Program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro before retiring last year. He's not done teaching just yet, though—since 2009 he has been on the faculty of the Warren Wilson Program for Writers. He now lives in Austin, Texas.

Hey, Alumni: Have You Got Good News to Share?

We want to hear from you! Our Annual Report isn't complete without news from our alumni. If you have a recent publication, a new job, an accomplishment you're proud of, a forthcoming book, a new addition to the family, or any news of interest to other alumni, send it our way via [this handy web form](#). And if you have a high-resolution photograph to share, we've included a way for you to upload it for us!

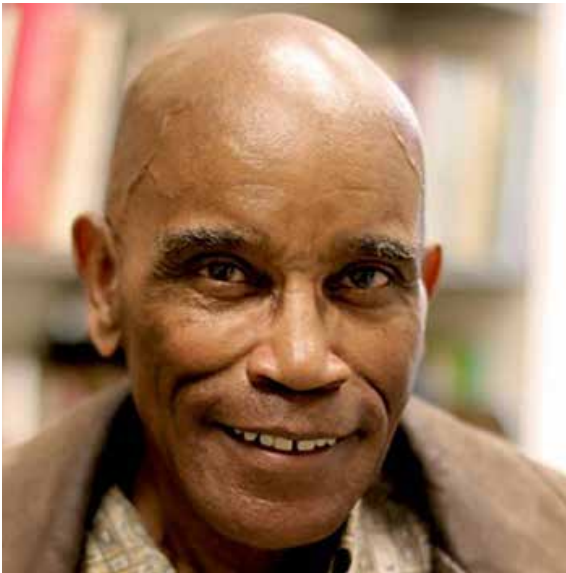
In future editions, we'd like to expand our alumni news section and keep you connected to generations of graduates from the Department of English and Comparative Literature.

In Memoriam: James Coleman

Dr. James W. Coleman, professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, died in Chapel Hill on October 24, 2019, at the age of seventy-three. Dr. Coleman's warm presence, unfailing generosity, and commitment to scholarship and teaching enriched the life of the department immeasurably, and we are deeply saddened by his passing.

Coleman joined the English and Comparative Literature faculty in 1990 and became a full professor in 2001. In 2011/12, he was nominated for a distinguished chair. Before coming to UNC, he taught briefly at San Diego State University and for sixteen years at Colorado College. At UNC, he taught many courses on African American literature, African British literature, and literary modernism and postmodernism.

Coleman's scholarly work comprised a wide range of books and articles chiefly devoted to African American literature. He published five books: *Blackness and Modernism: The Literary Career of John Edgar Wideman* (1989); *Black Male Fiction and the Legacy of Caliban* (2001), which was selected as a Choice Outstanding Academic Title in 2003; *Faithful Vision: Treatments of the Sacred, Spiritual, and Supernatural in Twentieth-Century African American Fiction* (2006); *Writing Blackness: John Edgar Wideman's Art and Experimentation* (2010); and *Understanding Edward P. Jones* (2016). He was working on a book about contemporary slave narratives, tentatively titled *The Anti-Protest Novel and the Neo-Slave Narrative: The South in African American Male Fiction since Richard Wright*.



James Coleman

"I feel very fortunate to have known James Coleman," wrote Mary Floyd-Wilson, Chair of the Department of English and Comparative Literature. "James was a dedicated scholar and thinker who found satisfaction in contemplating profound complexities in his projects; I always benefited from our conversations. He was clear-eyed but still hopeful. And he was a truly kind person. We all miss him terribly."

For more on Coleman's life, [see the obituary](#) published in the Durham *Herald-Sun*. To read tributes from some of the many colleagues and students whose lives Coleman touched over the years, or to contribute your own memories, see the [department's memorial page](#).

In Memoriam: Kimball King

Dr. James Kimball King, Professor Emeritus in the English and Comparative Literature department who taught for 40 years and adjunct professor in the Dramatic Arts department, passed away on April 26, 2019.

Dr. King's research and publications focused on dramatic literature. During his time in the department of English and Comparative Literature, he authored and edited thirteen books, published nearly 100 articles, and delivered more than 40 talks on the subject. He also served as vice-chair on the Playmakers Advisory Board.

Dr. King received a Tanner Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching as well as two other teaching awards. Over the course of 25 summers, Dr. King took more than 1,000 students to study theatre in London. After retiring, he taught at least one online drama course per semester for the UNC Friday Center.



Kimball King

In Memoriam: Howard Harper

Dr. Howard Harper, who taught in the English and Comparative Literature department for 43 years, passed away on April 12, 2019.

Between college and graduate school, Dr. Harper served three years of active duty as a Naval officer supporting UN peacekeeping troop transport following the Korean Conflict. He continued to serve in the Naval Reserve, retiring with the rank of Commander in 1990. In 1964, he earned his PhD in English from Penn State University and moved his young family to Chapel Hill, NC. He joined the faculty of the English department at UNC where he instructed and inspired undergraduate and graduate students for 43 years.



Howard Harper

His research and publications addressed 20th century British and American fiction, and many students remember him fondly from his Film Criticism course. He had many friends in the UNC community and was a member of University Presbyterian Church. He was known for his studious nature, keen intellect, and infectious smile. His presence will be deeply missed.

In Memoriam: Elizabeth Spencer

Elizabeth Spencer—celebrated author of many books, and a visiting writer in UNC’s Creative Writing Program from 1986 to 1992—died on December 22, 2019, at her home in Chapel Hill. She was 98 years old.

Spencer published nine novels, seven short story collections, a memoir, and a play, over nearly seventy years. A native of Mississippi, she was praised by her longtime friend and fellow writer Eudora Welty for “the accuracy of her eye and ear, [her] talent, and a certain prankish gaiety of spirit.” All her days, she possessed a keen mind and piercing wit, delighting her frequent visitors with tales of graduate school at Vanderbilt in the 1940s, a Fulbright Fellowship in Rome in the 1950s, and the life she shared for decades with her husband John Rusher in Montreal, before they moved to Chapel Hill in 1986.

Spencer’s best-known piece of fiction, *The Light in the Piazza* (1960), became a 1962 film starring Olivia de Havilland. In 2005, composer Adam Guettel and playwright Craig



Elizabeth Spencer

Lucas transformed the same story into a musical, which won six Tony awards. She received dozens of literary prizes, including (in 2002) the third Thomas Wolfe Prize from the Department of English at UNC, which honors Carolina’s most famous literary alumni and recognizes contemporary writers with distinguished bodies of work.

With Walker Percy (UNC class of 1937), Shelby Foote (UNC class of 1939), and others, Spencer helped found the Fellowship of Southern Writers. She was a revered member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Next year, the nonprofit Library of America, which publishes definitive editions of such essential writers as Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, and William Faulkner, will add an Elizabeth Spencer volume to its series.

For more on Spencer, see her [New York Times obituary](#) or [the memorial page](#), with tribute wall, hosted by her funeral home. —*Michael McFee, photo by The Clarion-Ledger (Jackson, MS)*

New Books by Faculty

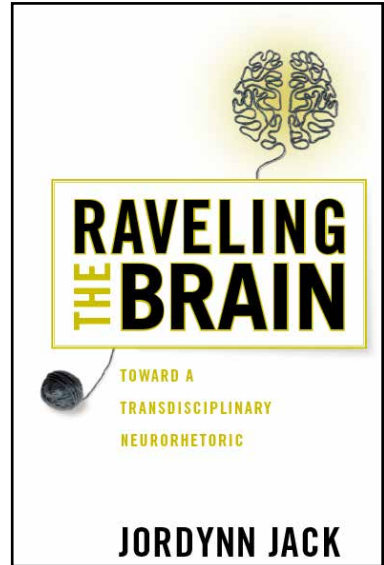
Raveling the Brain: Toward a Transdisciplinary Neurorhetoric (Ohio State University Press, 2019)

Professor Jordynn Jack of UNC's Department of English and Comparative Literature has just released her new book, *Raveling the Brain: Toward a Transdisciplinary Neurorhetoric*. Her innovative work, which bridges the gap between neuroscience and rhetoric, is committed to "developing a framework" to better understand neuroscientific arguments.

"A friend of mine does research in neuroscience," Jack says, "and we started chatting about his field and the role that persuasion seems to play in it." As a professor of rhetoric, Jack understands persuasion. The tradition of rhetoric extends back to ancient Greece, where it developed out of a culture that prized the idea of public speech, or oration. Since then, the discipline has emerged and re-emerged in constantly evolving forms. Today, it is one of the fastest growing subdisciplines in literary studies, and its applications stretch far beyond the boundaries of what has traditionally been considered literature.

Newer developments in the field of rhetoric, however, have not yet hit the sciences. "For instance," Jack continues, "a study on the neuroscience of persuasion might cite Aristotle's Rhetoric but none of the tremendous body of research being done by contemporary rhetoricians. But, by the same token, humanities researchers tend to privilege popular science books that, by virtue of how quickly science moves, are often out of date, presenting 'known knowledge' that authors often seek to popularize."

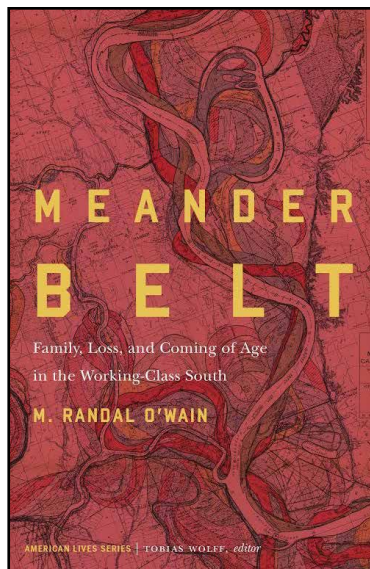
This is not Jack's first foray into the links between rhetoric and neuroscience. She edited (and published an essay in) a 2012 collection entitled *Neurorhetorics*, which analyzes the commonalities among rhetorical discourses that cluster around the prefix *neuro-*. —Bailey Fernandez



Jordynn Jack

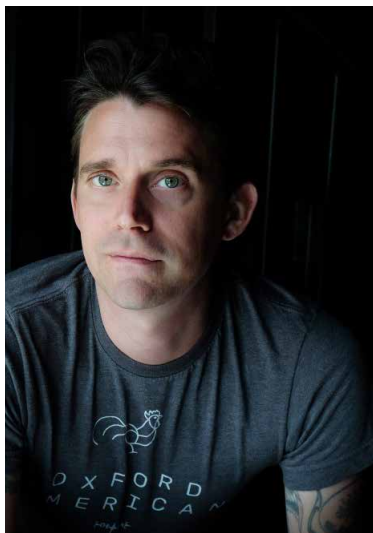
**Meander Belt: Family, Loss, and
Coming of Age in the Working-Class
South**
(University of Nebraska Press, 2019)

In *Meander Belt*, Teaching Assistant Professor M. Randal O'Wain offers a reflection on how a working-class boy from Memphis, Tennessee, came to fall in love with language, reading, writing, and the larger world outside of the American South. This memoir examines what it means for the son of a carpenter to value mental rather than physical labor and what this does to his relationship with his family, whose livelihood and sensibility are decidedly blue collar. Straining the father-son bond further, O'Wain leaves home to find a life outside Memphis, roaming from place to place, finding odd jobs, and touring with his band. From memory and observation, O'Wain assembles a subtle and spare portrait of his roots, family, and ultimately discovers that his working-class upbringing is not so antithetical to the man he has become.



Chelsi Long of *Brevity* hails the book as “a deliberate construction of salient moments, when read, that trigger our memories, produce their own, and linger like lived experience” and Anthony Clemons, writing for *Hippocampus Magazine* calls it “one of those rare literary gems.”

O'Wain, who began teaching fiction and creative nonfiction writing at UNC in 2017, holds an MFA from Iowa's Nonfiction Writing Program. His second book, *Hallelujah Station and Other Stories*, is forthcoming this year. His essays and short stories have appeared in *Oxford American*, *Guernica*, *The Pinch*, *Booth*, *Hotel Amerika*, *storySouth*, among others. He also serves as a National Endowment of the Arts Writing Fellow at the Beckley Federal Correctional Institution. His awards include the *Zone 3* Fiction Award and an Audience Choice Award from the UNO Film Festival for the short film *Arrow of Light*, which he wrote. *Arrow of Light* was also an official selection of the Oxford Film Festival, the Pontchatrain Film Festival, and the Memphis Indie Film Festival.



M. Randal O'Wain

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