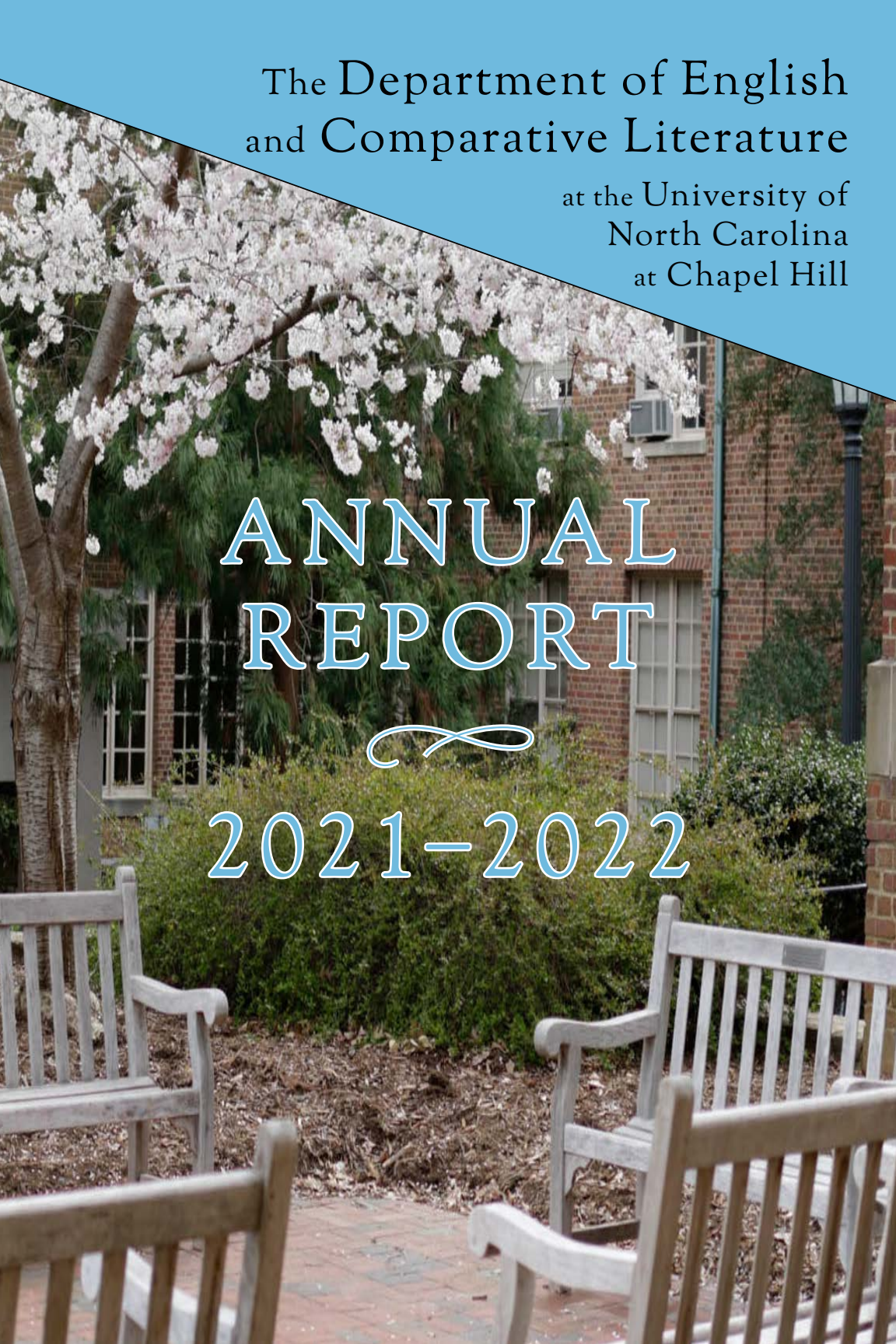
The Department of English and Comparative Literature

at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



ANNUAL REPORT

2021–2022

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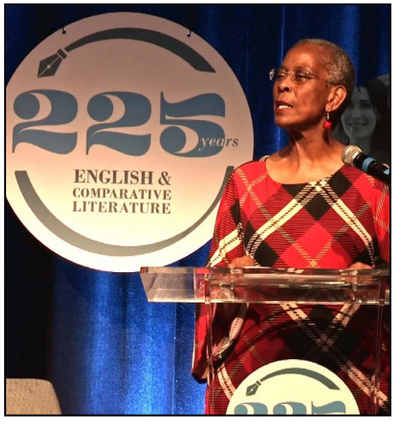

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Some of our most notable alumni returned to campus to help the department celebrate its 225th year of serving students at Carolina. Relive the festivities and explore our interactive timeline.

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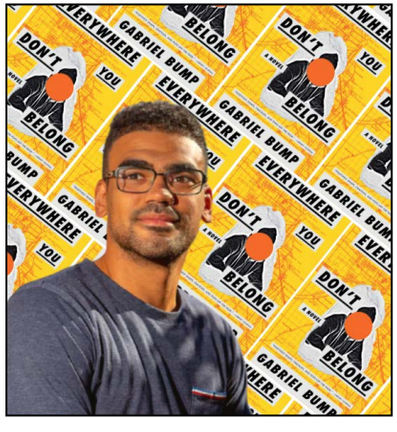
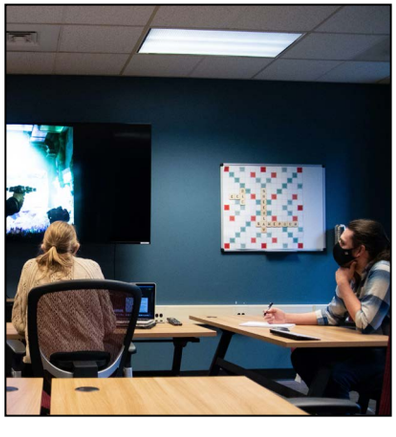
Novelist Gabriel Bump and scholar Stephanie DeGooyer arrived at UNC with new books and a passion for teaching. They share a little bit about their upcoming projects and their literary interests.





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Dr. Courtney Rivard's National Endowment for the Humanities grant is helping the Department of English and Comparative Literature become a hub for teaching and learning with (and about) games. And students in Greenlaw couldn't be happier about it.

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From literary luminaries Lorrie Moore and Frank Bruni to health researchers Mara Buchbinder and Mike Winstead, the Department of English and Comparative Literature has been host to lectures, presentations, and performances that enrich the campus community.

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Dr. Hilary Lithgow is leading an intensive program that helps student veterans find a home in the scholarly community and exemplifies the kind of teaching that meets students where they are.

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A Letter from the Chair

Dear Alumni and Friends,

2021–2022 has been a year of celebration and transition. In the fall, we were excited and gratified to celebrate 225 years of rhetoric, writing, film, and literature at Carolina. We began planning this celebration prepandemic as a gathering for our friends, colleagues, alumni, and supporters. It was transformed into a virtual opportunity for folks both far and wide to enjoy the vibrant and influential contributions that the English and Comparative Literature students, faculty, and affiliates have made, and continue to make, to the humanities.

Although we had to pivot the programming to virtual, we were simply thrilled with the offerings on our schedule of events. Our keynote speakers, Trudier Harris, Frank Bruni (our Thomas Wolfe Prize winner), and Jill McCorkle, spoke directly to the importance of studying rhetoric, writing, film, and literature. Dr. Harris reminded us, as educators, that it is "only by examining, discerning, analyzing, and challenging, can we hope to reinstate Truth; the poor dethroned fellow desperately needs our help." In the face of "tribalism run amok," Bruni cited "literature, and good journalism, and carefully chosen words . . . as answers and antidotes. . . . Writing matters greatly as the engine of empathy, as a reminder of our bonds." Honoring her time as a student in UNC's literature and creative writing classes, McCorkle observed that "art encourages us to think; the greater the art, the more potential for all that one might see and interpret."

If you missed these inspirational talks, you still have the opportunity to watch them on our 225 website. Here you can also catch a wonderful concert with alumni Tift Merritt

Mary Floyd-Wilson works in the field of early modern English literature, primarily drama placed in cultural, social, and intellectual contexts. Her work on the history of emotion helped initiate the "affective turn" in early modern literary scholarship. In addition to serving as chair for five years, her Shakespeare course is one of the most sought-after undergraduate courses in the department.

and Joseph Terrell, a discussion with Gabriel Bump about his novel, *Everywhere You Don't Belong*, an evening with UNC's student poets, a conversation about our Latina/o Studies Program, and a presentation by our ECL undergraduate majors (which includes a beautifully made student video about our film concentration).

We are thankful to our esteemed 225 honorary committee: Trudier Harris (co-chair), Wade Smith (co-chair), Randall Kenan (in memoriam), Wilsonia Cherry, Clyde Edgerton, Thomas S. Kenan III, Dave Krinsky, Tom Long, Alane Mason, Jill McCorkle, Mark Meares, J. Reid Murchinson III, Anne Ponder, Kendall Rhodes, Sallie Shuping Russell, and Nancy Hanes White. And we owe infinite gratitude to the fabulous 225 planning committee and support team: Bland Simpson (chair), Susan Irons (co-chair), Connie Eble, Liz Gualtieri-Reed, Beverly Taylor, Erika Lindemann, Rick Warner, Courtney Rivard, Hannah Montgomery, Grant Glass, María DeGuzmán; Corban Davis, Jennifer Washington, Blair Killian, Kathryn Banas, and Jennifer Guy. Of special note to all of you, our friends and alums, is the creation of an English and Comparative Literature 225 Timeline, which you will learn more about in the pages of this newsletter.

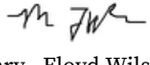
Our department has been coping, and sometimes even triumphing, in the face of COVID restrictions—finding consolation in the wide reach of the Zoom webinar and relishing the fact that we haven't had to search for parking to hear a lecture or a reading. But this spring not only brought redbuds but also our first in-person event in two years! We were thrilled to welcome the wonderfully talented, sharp, and funny Lorrie Moore as our 2022 Hanes Writer-in-Residence. In addition to delivering a moving reading of her story "Face Time," Professor Moore visited classrooms and participated in panel discussions, giving our student writers the chance to ask her questions about the creative process. In support of our students, I feel compelled to quote Moore's statement about her own difficult choice to pursue writing as a career. She says, "I didn't have the financial freedom to be a writer and have always struggled with that, but I also knew I didn't want to find myself sixty-five years old and ruing the moment in my youth when I became prematurely practical." We are very glad that she had the good sense to persist. In Moore's words, "Art has been given to us to keep us interested and engaged—rather than distracted by materialism or sated with boredom—so that we can attach to this life, a life which might, otherwise, be an unbearable one."

It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to Michael Chitwood, Susan Irons, Maggie O'Shaughnessey, Thomas Reinert, and James Thompson, who are all retiring this year. Their contributions to the department's teaching and scholarly missions are too innumerable to list; we will also miss their kind collegiality and friendship. We have been fortunate to welcome new colleagues to our community as well. You will have the opportunity to read about Dr. Stephanie DeGooyer, an expert in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century transatlantic literature and culture, and Gabriel Bump, a novelist who has joined our creative writing program. We also give a warm welcome to Joseph Telegen and Hill Taylor, who have joined teaching-track faculty.

I'm closing the book on a chapter of my own career, as this is my last year as chair of the department. It's been a wonderful, though sometimes turbulent, ride. I am exceedingly grateful to my colleagues, who impress me every day with the time, energy, and intelligence that they give to the sustenance and growth of our department. We are very pleased to welcome Dr. Marsha Collins to the office—she brings a wealth of experience and goodwill to the role!

Thanks to you all for your continued support of the Department of English and Comparative Literature.

Warmly,



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

HAPPY 225TH BIRTHDAY

The Department of English and Comparative Literature celebrates its founding in style.

Trudier Harris answered questions from the audience after her keynote lecture entitled "Are We Literate Yet? Adventures in Education, Politics, and Culture." Harris taught at Carolina for twenty-seven years before retiring in 2009.

A star-studded lineup. Two months' worth of events, culminating in a weekend of lectures from beloved faculty and noteworthy alumni, musical performances, critical inquiry, the awarding of the Thomas Wolfe Prize, and the rekindling of many friendships forged in Greenlaw Hall. To say that the Department of English and Comparative Literature's 225th anniversary celebration was a success might be the understatement of the century.

Beginning in September 2021, the department offered eight nights of programming over two months, featuring the scholarship and creative performance that has made it a leader in the South and across the country. The ongoing pandemic limited the attendance at live events, but, as you might expect from one of the most innovative departments at Carolina, we adapted—and in the end, virtual offerings allowed us to bring in additional guests and connect with alumni and donors across the world.

The festivities began with a book club discussion of *Everywhere You Don't Belong*, which put novelist and new faculty member Gabriel Bump in conversation with longtime faculty member Daniel Wallace. (For more on Bump, see page 14.) Creative writing took center stage in the next event as well when poetry faculty Tyree Daye and Gabrielle Calvocoressi gathered alumni and current student poets for Poets Speak Out!, a riveting performance highlighting the vibrancy of poetry at UNC that was followed by a salon with eleven creative writing professors.

To showcase the first and oldest program of its kind in the Southeast, the UNC Latina/o Studies Program looked at its past, present, and future. Director María DeGuzmán began with an overview of the program, whose leaders have brought more than one hundred scholars, creative writers, and performers to campus and developed an undergraduate minor. Graduate and undergraduate students then shared their cutting-edge research, teaching, and other creative Latina/o Studies endeavors.

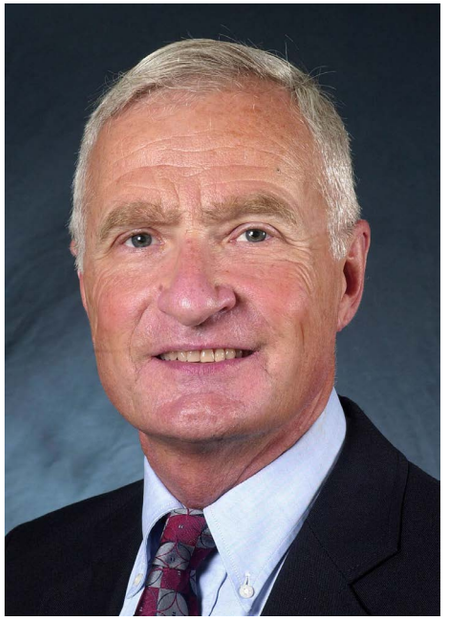
A panel of recent Carolina graduates convened for a conversation exploring the broad range of undergraduate projects and the transformative experiences that define the major for our students. They shared memorable classroom moments and key takeaways from their experience in our department, demonstrating how today's majors are drawing on our department's traditions in ways that are both familiar and novel.

During the event planning, many alumni fondly remembered their time in English and Comparative Literature classes, so six current and former professors opened their (virtual) classrooms for an evening of classes. Exploring topics ranging from the heroic journey to slave catechisms to memoir writing, they gave us a chance to reexperience the joys of being part of the learning community at UNC. Professors Danielle Christmas, Marc Cohen, Marsha Collins, and Stephanie Elizondo Griest gave alumni a taste of the passion and scholarship that our students encounter each day, and legendary Professors Emeritus George Lensing and Tom Stumpf made highly anticipated returns to the classroom.

Professor Hilary Lithgow (bottom left) facilitated a discussion of alumni viewpoints.

Jill McCorkle's first two novels were released simultaneously when she was just out of college, and *The New York Times* called her "a born novelist." Since then, she has published five novels and four collections of short stories, and her work has appeared in *Best American Short Stories* several times, as well as *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*. Five of her books have been *New York Times* notable books, and her novel, *Life after Life*, was a *New York Times* best seller.

George Lensing has retired from teaching but remains active in the university community. After serving as dean of honors for the College of Arts and Sciences, secretary of the faculty, director of the Office of Distinguished Scholarships, director of undergraduate English, and director of English honors, Lensing continues to enhance retired faculty's connections to the university. During the ECL 225 celebration, he offered a class called "'The Road Not Taken': Robert Frost's Poetic Game with His Readers."



The celebration wrapped up in October with an astounding weekend of keynote lectures. Dr. Trudier Harris, beloved in her time at Carolina, returned to great enthusiasm and open arms to deliver an impassioned lecture on literacy, then answered audience questions in a session hosted by Dr. Bill Andrews. Alums Frank Bruni and Jill McCorkle both returned to campus: Bruni received the 2021 Thomas Wolfe Prize and delivered the accompanying lecture (see page 24 for more information about that event), and McCorkle dazzled the crowd with a lecture on the pleasures and necessities of ambiguity in literature.

In the spring semester of 1998, Tift Merritt asked Prof. Bland Simpson if she might do an independent songwriting class with him. Simpson agreed, and Merritt wrote a song a week, each in a different musical-historical genre. Years later, Simpson added Lyrics & Lyricists to his regular course offerings, ultimately initiating the new Creative Writing concentration in Musical Writing. In 2010, Joseph Terrell enrolled in the course, as well as in the first Collaboration: Composers & Lyricists course in 2013 with his band, Mipso. Merritt and Terrell both returned to Carolina for the final event of the 225 celebration, performing several songs each and discussing their craft.

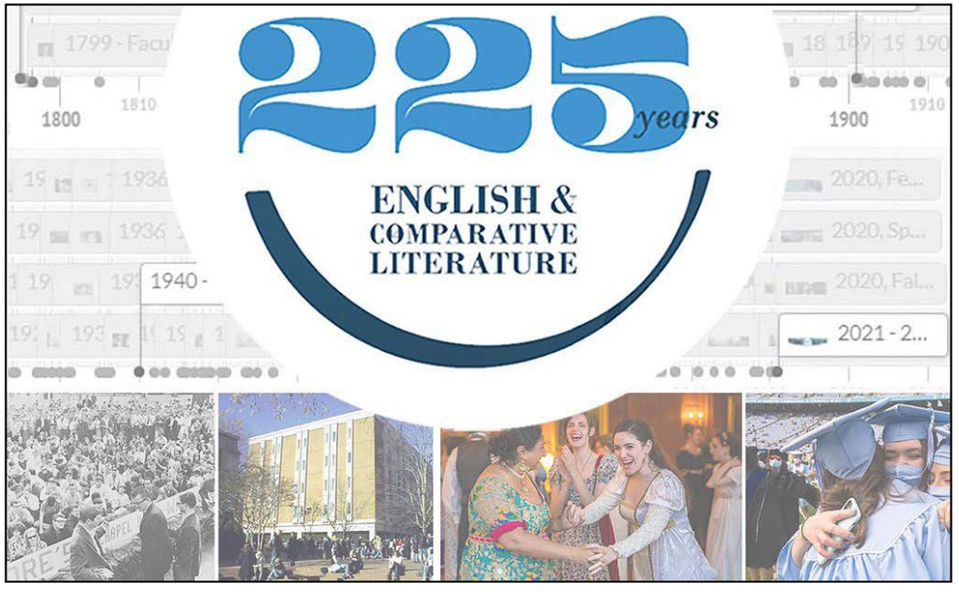
Merritt and Terrell reminded us that Carolina students have a profound impact on the curriculum, and McCorkle urged us all to keep our eyes and ears open and remain alive to the world's possibilities and complexities. Harris implored us to welcome alternative ways of knowing, stretching from intuition to making connections to our pasts through physical objects, and Bruni appealed to our better natures, asking us to seek unfamiliar perspectives and explore the values we share. Our 225th anniversary provided rich opportunities to remember the rights and responsibilities of using language and to celebrate the ways the Department of English and Comparative Literature prepares students to create a better world.

Tift Merritt's 2004 album *Tambourine* was nominated for a Grammy Award, and in 2005, she was nominated by the Americana Music Association for Artist of the Year, Song of the Year, and Album of the Year. Since that powerful start, she has performed throughout North America and Europe and released seven studio albums. One of the most popular and acclaimed musicians to come out of North Carolina in recent decades, Merritt received UNC's Distinguished Alumna Award in 2018.

Guitarist Joseph Terrell of High Point was a religious studies major at Carolina. He formed the Chapel Hill indie-Americana band Mipso, which made its acclaimed debut with the album *Dark Holler Pop*. The band has since released six albums, and in 2014 Terrell won the MerleFest Chris Austin Songwriting Contest. He spent 2020 producing an album for songwriter Shay Martin Lovette ("Scatter & Gather"), recording new music with his brother, Patrick Terrell, and recording a solo album that will soon be released.

THE DEPARTMENT AT 225: A TIMELINE

Faculty and grad students create an interactive timeline to highlight the growth of English and Comparative Literature at Carolina.



To celebrate the department's 225th anniversary, the Digital Literacy and Communications Lab worked with past and present faculty and graduate and undergraduate students to craft a working timeline that chronicles its history. Available online, the timeline gives rich insight into the department, which has served most undergraduates since its inception.

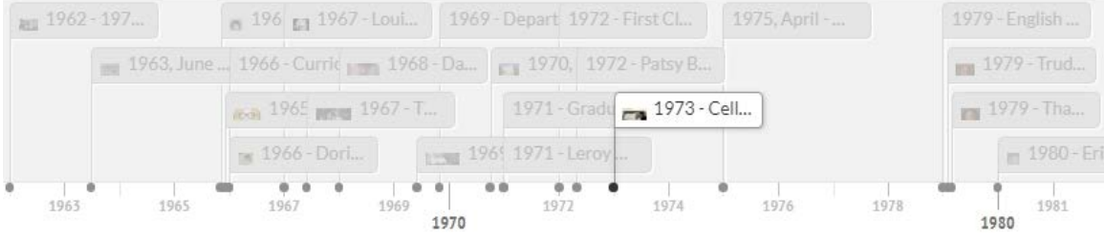
The study of rhetoric, writing, literature, and narratives began with the university's inception and grew substantially over the last two centuries, ultimately creating a culture among Carolina faculty, staff, and students that allows for critical reflection on the world around us. This culture led to the creation of today's Department of English and Comparative Literature as well as the programs in journalism, folklore studies, American studies, film studies, philology studies, Latina/o studies, creative writing, the writing program, the *Carolina Quarterly*, and the William Blake Archive, and organizations such as the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies and the Playmakers. Despite this eventual growth, the university culture was not always so inclusive: for years, a narrow mindset reflective of the national ideology of inequality prevented many from becoming students and faculty. Consequently, the timeline acknowledges these exclusions and inequities and how they shaped the department's history and its legacy.

Under the guidance of Dr. Courtney Rivard, director of the Digital Literacy and Communications Lab, students including Garland Reiman, Emily Youree, Paul Blom, Grant Glass, and Hannah Montgomery spent two years combing through archives, conducting interviews, and compiling information in order to create the most complete and detailed history of the department possible.

JANUARY 1, 1973

1973 - Cellar Door Established

In 1973, Cellar Door, an undergraduate liter
journal at Carolina, begins publication. Pub
each fall and spring in print and online, the
magazine seeks to showcase undergraduate
outstanding poetry, prose, and art. Students
apply to join the reading staff, and creative
faculty members such as Max Steele (1922-
Randall Kenan (1963-2020) have served as j
work submitted by UNC students. English P
Michael McFee (1954-) is currently the stud
advisor for the journal.



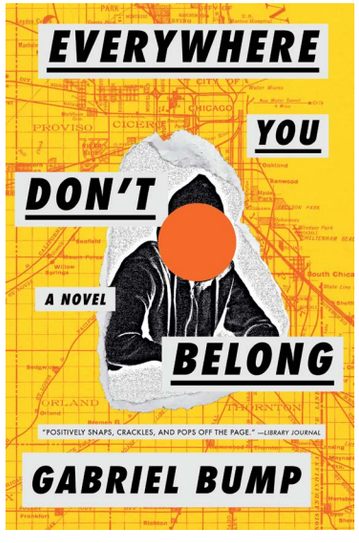
The timeline could not have been completed without the help of Dr. Connie Eble and Dr. Erika Lindemann. A faculty member since 1971, Dr. Eble shared fifty years' worth of institutional knowledge and records. Dr. Lindemann also contributed information gained during her decades as a faculty member and administrator at Carolina, including her research into the history of rhetoric and writing and her creation of a digital history of the antebellum university.

The digital infrastructure of this timeline was built using open-source software provided by Scalar. Grant Glass customized coding to adapt the software to the needs of the project.

Click here to visit the timeline.

NEW FACULTY ENRICH CAROLINA COMMUNITY

Gabriel Bump and Stephanie DeGooyer sat down with Digital Literacy and Communications Lab staff to say hello.



Novelist Gabriel Bump grew up in South Shore Chicago and received his MFA in fiction from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His debut novel, *Everywhere You Don't Belong*, is currently being adapted for television and earned Bump the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence.

What about UNC are you most excited about?

"To work and write in beautiful North Carolina alongside my talented, compassionate, and fearless colleagues in the Creative Writing program and broader English Department. To join the lineage of authors and students who have called Chapel Hill home: Randall Kenan, Jenny Offill, Doris Betts, Thomas Wolfe, Walker Percy, Alan Shapiro, Marianne Gingher, on and on. I can't believe my dumb luck. This is a special place overflowing with brilliance and kindness. Currently: Tyree Daye, Gabrielle Calvocoressi, Daniel Wallace, Stephanie Elizondo Griest, Michael Chitwood, Adam O'Fallon Price, Karen Tucker, Matt Randal O'Wain, Ross White, Bland Simpson, Michael McFee—these people aren't messing around! I feel endless gratitude for Mary Floyd-Wilson and Elizabeth Engelhardt for bringing me into this formidable and wild bunch. I hope to make a permanent home here. Also, basketball. Go Heels."

Which literary work do you return to most often?

"I think about *Ray* by Barry Hannah a lot. *Sula* by Toni Morrison. *Troubles* by J. G. Farrell. Recently, *There Will Be No More Good Nights without Good Nights* by Laura van den Berg, republished by local Bull City Press. *The Battlefield Where the Moon Says I Love You* by Frank Stanford. *Jesus' Son* by Denis Johnson. *Drive to Survive*, the Formula 1 docuseries on Netflix. Okay. I'm rambling."

What is a project you're currently working on?

"I'm adapting my novel for television. And fidgeting through some novels in progress."

How has remote teaching/learning/researching changed your relationship with academia and how you approach your job?

"All of 2020 changed my relationship with academia and work and life. We made it through a horrible moment. A lot of people didn't make it, or barely made it, or made it and lost loved ones, jobs, sanity. My responsibility in the classroom, as I understand it, is to help students appreciate life in all its complicated glory. Cherish it. Hold on and don't let go. Sit in your backyard, stare at the birds, and write a short story about their home lives; their weddings, graduations, bickering, and divorces; that moment, years from now, when they run into each other at the bird feeder and apologize and hug, exchange an amiable peck on the cheek. Teaching remotely last year made my responsibility in the classroom feel more acute and pressing."

What is a fun fact about you?

"I love books! Books are fun!"

Stephanie DeGooyer specializes in intersections of law and literature with interests in immigration, health humanities, and medical humanities. Her forthcoming book, *Acts of Naturalization*, is slated for publication in 2022, with other works also in progress. Dr. DeGooyer previously held an assistant professorship at both Harvard and Willamette Universities and was a 2020–2021 ACLS Burkhardt Fellow at UCLA.

What about UNC are you most excited about?

"The people. Long before my official start date, many faculty and students reached out to me to make me feel welcome. The community here is incredible.

I am also excited about the interdisciplinary nature of the ECL department. For example, I am planning to teach a health and humanities seminar on the history of disease and colonialism next year. I have already made several connections with faculty in history and law, as well as my outstanding colleagues in ECL."

What is a project you're working on right now?

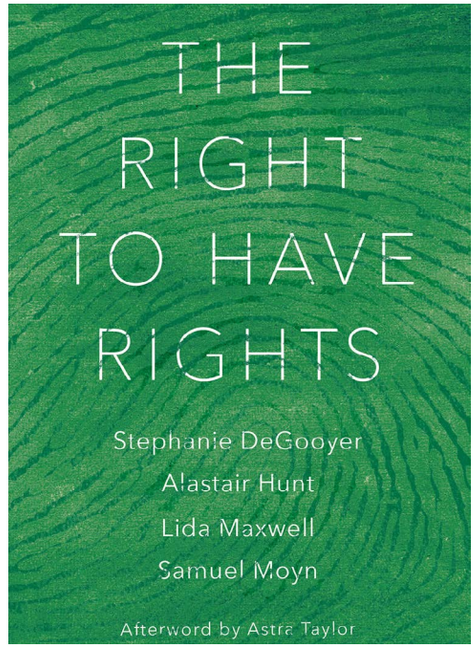
"I'm in the final stages of completing a book on the legal and fictional history of naturalization, which will be out in early 2022. I am currently working on two other book projects: the first is tentatively called 'Health Nativism,' which is the title of an article I cowrote with an infectious diseases doctor at the beginning of the pandemic. Expanding on this concept, I return to eighteenth-century fictional and historical archives to think about the longer histories of disease control and colonialism. I am also coediting a volume on the history of the novel, which will feature over fifty articles on the global history of the novel, past, present, and future. I also have a few public articles in the mix (I know you asked for one project, but I am never working on just one thing!)."

How has remote teaching/learning/researching changed your relationship with academia and how you approach your job?

"I was teaching at Harvard when the pandemic first upended classrooms. After that, I was on fellowship for a year (remotely) at UCLA. So I have done very little remote teaching outside of the emergency mode of the first months of the pandemic. What I can say, though, is that these experiences have made me value in-person learning and archival research like never before. I will never take a classroom or musty archive for granted again. My respect for librarians was massively deepened this past year. If not for the librarians who helped me find digital copies of research materials, I could not have completed my book."

What is a literary work that you return to most often?

It's a tie between *Robinson Crusoe* and *Frankenstein*. I've written about both of these novels, and I turn to them often in my teaching. *Robinson Crusoe* is a narrative about global capitalism, trade, and migration; I always find something new when I read it. Shelley's story of an unnamed creature who is universally spurned has been useful for teaching ideas about immigration. The creature demonstrates the predicament of so many migrants today: he cannot be recognized as a subject anywhere and has no native land to which he can return. I have a chapter in my book about the significance of the fact that, in the 1831 edition of the novel, Shelley changes Victor Frankenstein's biography to make him a naturalized foreigner in Geneva.



What is a fun fact about you?

"I'm Canadian!"

Interviews by Rose Steptoe and Meleena Gil

A PASSION FOR FILM

Professor Rick Warner has been honored with a Chapman Family Teaching Award.

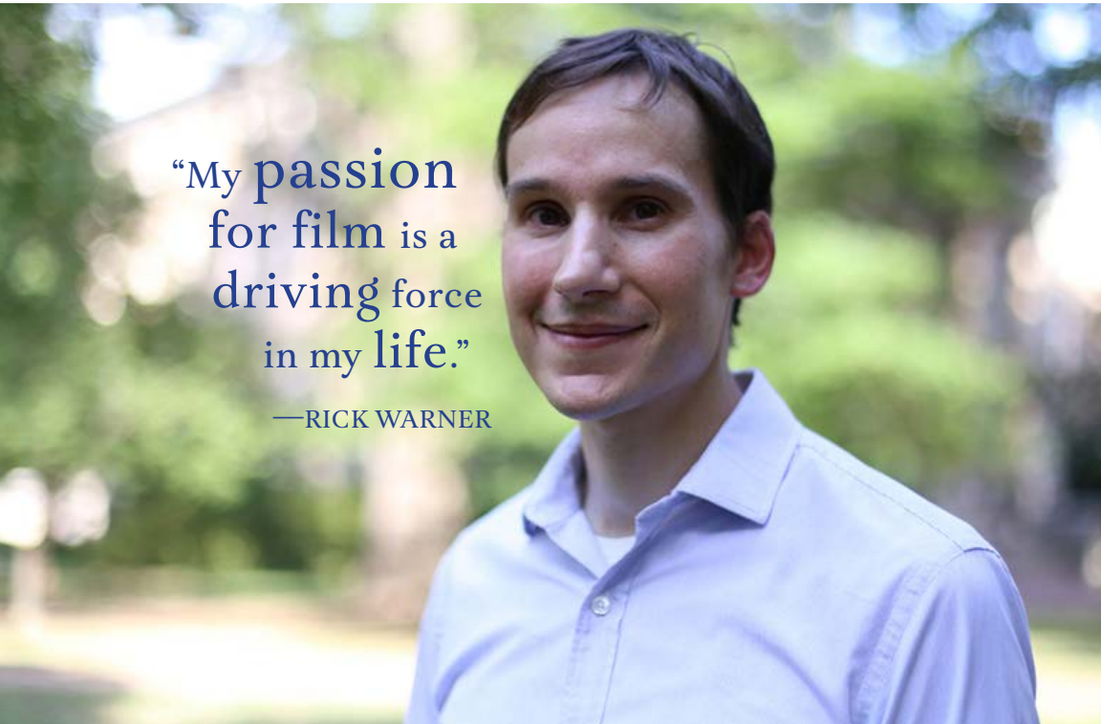
In celebration of the ways in which he brings his fascination with film alive for students, Professor and Director of Film Studies Dr. Rick Warner was honored with UNC's prestigious Chapman Family Teaching Award. Warner's win is another reminder that professors in the Department of English and Comparative Literature are some of the most engaged, student-centered faculty teaching today.

Chapman Awards are given to select faculty for the distinguished teaching of undergraduate students. In addition to university-wide recognition, each honoree receives a $30,000 stipend to be used over five years in pursuit of a project to enhance their teaching or research.

Dr. Warner is one of four recipients of the Chapman Award this year, alongside faculty from the Biology, Biomedical Engineering, and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Departments. In addition, he joins the ranks of the twenty-four English and Comparative Literature faculty members who have received the award since its inception in 1994.

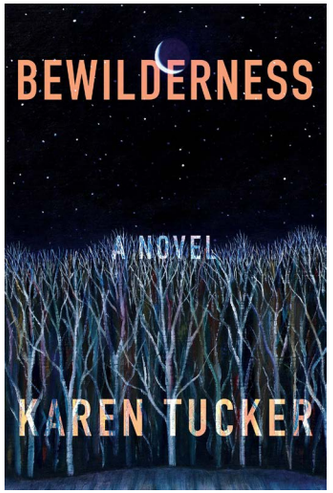
"My passion for film is a driving force in my life, and I'm endlessly grateful to be able to share that energy in a classroom with such inquisitive, enthusiastic, and observant students who, in all honesty, teach me as much as I teach them," Dr. Warner said.

"My deepest thanks to those who nominated me for this award," he added.



BEWILDERNESS SHIMMERS IN THE LIMELIGHT

Karen Tucker's debut novel was longlisted for the prestigious Aspen Words Literary Prize.



Set in a small Appalachian town, *Bewilderness* is an incisive look into the many dimensions of the opioid epidemic and its intersections with the health insurance and restaurant industries. In an interview last year, Dr. Tucker shared that she is "trying to chip away at persistent social stigmas and coax US policymakers towards decriminalization, while telling what I hope will be a great story."

Teaching Assistant Professor Karen Tucker is no stranger to accolades, but this one certainly feels good. Tucker was longlisted this winter for the Aspen Words Literary Prize, a prestigious annual prize for "a work of fiction that addresses a vital contemporary issue" and "demonstrates the transformative power of literature on thought and culture," according to the Aspen Institute.

In addition to *Bewilderness*, released in 2021 by Catapult, Tucker's fiction has appeared in the *Missouri Review*, *Yale Review*, *Tin House Online*, *EPOCH*, *Boulevard*, *American Literary Review*, and elsewhere.

Born and raised in North Carolina, her awards include an Elizabeth George Foundation Grant for Emerging Writers, a PEO Scholar Award, the George M. Harper Award for Creative Writing, the Jerome Stern Series Spotlight Award in fiction, and a scholarship to the Longleaf Writers Conference.

USING GAMES CRITICALLY

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) announced on January 11 the recipients for $24.7 million in grants in humanities research—and among them was a project by the Department of English and Comparative Literature and the Digital Literacy and Communications (DLC) Lab, led by Dr. Courtney Rivard, devoted to developing a Critical Games Studies minor.

A $54,000 grant will go a long way toward transforming curriculum through games. A new effort titled "Integrating Storytelling & Critical Game Studies into the Curriculum" begins in July 2022 and "aims to provide faculty and graduate instructors with training and resources to teach and research with games." Subsequently, the department will submit a proposal to establish the minor.

Dr. Courtney Rivard explained that the project is directed at analyzing the centrality of narrative to video games as a medium. "Games have become a dominant cultural form in the US and throughout the world" that are in need of "a humanistic analytical lens to understand how they both shape and are shaped by structures of power and cultural representation," she said. "I believe that such analysis can bring critical perspective to games as well as create possibilities for the creation of alternative playful spaces that embrace difference."

The NEH grant continues the work on critical game studies of Rivard and the DLC lab gaming team, including David Hall, Stephanie Kinzinger, and Doug Stark, that began in 2019 with the creation of the Greenlaw Gameroom, UNC's first game-based classroom. The team also received a Lenovo Instructional Innovation Supplemental Grant to extend the work of the Greenlaw Gameroom.

Ryan Kroll (center) was the winner of the inaugural tournament. Fierce competition was just a precursor to a larger learning experience, as players and faculty considered how gameplay requires complex thinking and decision-making skills.

UNC is one of over 200 recipients of NEH grants throughout the United States, whose projects range across history, literature, philosophy, and the digital humanities.

Building on the efforts begun by Rivard and her team, the department continues to find new and innovative ways to bring games into the curriculum and into Greenlaw Hall. In concert with the UNC E-Sports club, the department hosted its first Critical Smash Tournament in November. Super Smash Bros. is a wildly popular Nintendo video game that has gained momentum in gaming tournaments on the local and international levels where players compete for top prizes.

The Critical Smash Tournament joined in on the Smash tournament phenomenon but with a scholarly twist. After players competed for the top spot, Dr. Rivard and PhD students Stephanie Kinzinger and David Hall discussed with the players how experts conceptualize the gameplay of Super Smash Bros. Ultimate as well as how the players viewed their own gameplay experiences.

Sounds like the tournament was, if you'll forgive us, a Smash hit.

2022 FRANK B. HANES WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

LORRIE MOORE

An unmistakeable legend visited Carolina for a week of classes and panels, culminating in an astounding reading.

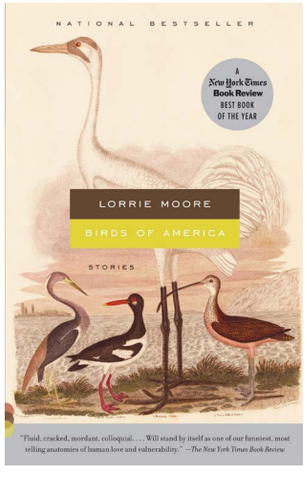
Lorrie Moore is a writer whose voice on the page is unmistakable: smart, satirical, dark, and fearless. She also knows her way around a punchline—she is very, very funny—but it would be a mistake to read her work purely for its comedic value. Her stories are masterpieces of the form because all the one-liners, the puns, and the sometimes-painful jokes bear the burden of a corresponding truth: all is not right in the world. Like Flannery O'Connor, a close literary relative, Moore's stories can be deeply tragic and exceptionally hilarious at the very same time.

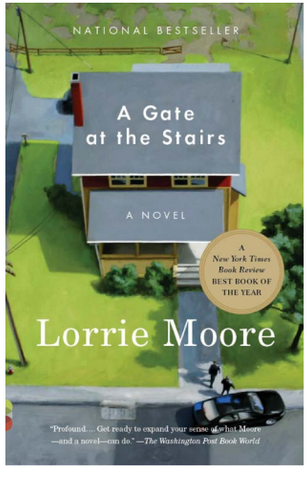
Moore made that wit and insight apparent when she visited UNC in March as this year's Frank B. Hanes Writer-in-Residence.

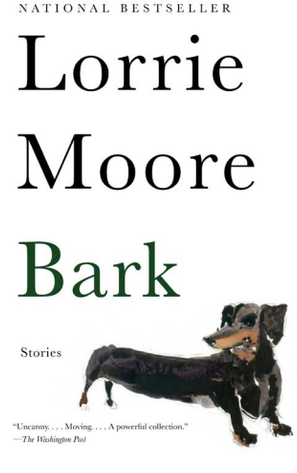
Moore participated in two panels with UNC faculty and staff: "Dangerous Truths," with creative writing faculty Karen Tucker and Stephanie Elizondo Griest, moderated by Michael Gutierrez; and "How to Become a (Funny) Writer," with faculty member Gabriel Bump and Humanities for the Public Good Director Ashley Melzer, moderated by Julia Ridley Smith, this year's Kenan Visiting Writer.

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-Chapel Hill's campus.

From book to book Moore's scalpel has only gotten sharper, as has the depth of her skill and breadth of her vision. Her first novel, *Anagrams* (1986), was followed by a second collection, *Like Life* (1990). Included in this collection is the story "You're Ugly, Too," her first to be published in *The New Yorker*, and reprinted, as so many Moore stories have been, in *The O. Henry Awards* and *The Best American Short Stories*. It was also included in *The Best Short Stories of the Century*, edited by John Updike.







Her second novel, *Who Will Run the Frog Hospital?* (1994), was followed by the seminal collection *Birds of America*, which came out in 1998 and won the Irish Times International Fiction Prize. Her 2009 novel, *A Gate at the Stairs*, was a finalist for the 2010 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction and for the Orange Prize for Fiction. A third collection, *Bark*, was shortlisted for the 2014 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award and was a finalist for The Story Prize.

Moore was the Delmore Schwartz Professor in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she taught creative writing for thirty years. She joined the faculty there in 1984 and left for Vanderbilt University in the fall of 2013, where she is now the Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English.

EMPATHY AND CURIOSITY

Alumnus Frank Bruni returns to Carolina to receive the 2021 Thomas Wolfe Prize.

Over a long, distinguished, and varied career, Frank Bruni has not written about just one thing but seemingly about all things: food, war, movies, George Bush, New York City, Congress, religion, and, intimately, about his own life. But through every incarnation he has never not been himself, unabashedly honest, incisive, and human.

Bruni returned to Carolina as part of the 225th anniversary of the Department of English and Comparative Literature and was honored with the prize named for one of the university's most acclaimed 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 (class of 1920). Established in 1999 with an endowed gift to the Department of English, the program 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.

As far back as the mid-1980s, when he was a writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*, Bruni's nascent voice and lifelong interests were evident. In 1984, he wrote about the burgeoning AIDS epidemic with an uncanny foresight; he wrote about a visit by Gary Hart, whom he criticized for offering no more than "placebo profundities"; he wrote an eloquent profile of Coretta Scott King. And in his weekly column "The Ferret Wheel," he wrote compellingly about the Wendy's "Where's the Beef?" commercial. "In light of the phrase's ever-spreading popularity," he noted, "an argument could be made that the Wendy's woman is the lament of a generation weaned on empty promises and subjected to endless public deceptions." Indeed. His sentences, then and now, have a confidence and clarity all writers strive for, and he has a steady moral compass as well, virtues that rarely pair up.

Bruni joined *The New York Times* in 1995, coming from *The Detroit Free Press*, where he was the chief movie critic and religion writer. Over the next twenty-five years, he served *The Times* as metro reporter, White House correspondent, Rome bureau chief, and chief restaurant critic. Finally, and perhaps most famously, in 2011 he became op-ed columnist. This may have been the ideal job for such an expansive writer. In 2016, the NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists gave him its Randy Shilts Award for LGBTQ Coverage for his career-long contributions to LGBTQ Americans. Earlier this year, he retired as a regular columnist to teach at Duke, where he will be the Eugene C. Patterson Professor of the Practice for Journalism and Public Policy at the Sanford School of Public Policy and will continue to write his *New York Times* newsletter and remain a contributing opinion writer.

He is the author of three *New York Times* best sellers: an examination of the college admissions frenzy, *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be* (2015); a memoir, *Born Round: The Secret History of a Full-Time Eater* (2009), about the joys and torments of his eating life; and *Ambling into History: The Unlikely Odyssey of George W. Bush* (2002). With Jennifer Steinhauer, he has also written *A Meatloaf in Every Oven: Two Chatty Cooks, One Iconic Dish, and Dozens of Recipes* (2017).

A Morehead Scholar at Carolina, Bruni graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1986 with a BA in English. "UNC," he writes, "significantly expanded my world, took me out of my comfort zone in the best possible way, and taught me the limits of any one person's experiences and the cinched parameters of any one perspective. That was an invaluable gift not only in terms of my subsequent journalism career and writing. That was an invaluable gift in terms of my humanity."

The Department of English and Comparative Literature bestows the Thomas Wolfe Prize each fall, around the time of Wolfe's October 3 birthday. In addition to receiving prize money and a medal, the honored writer comes to campus as the university's guest and delivers a lecture, which is free and open to the public. This event is a well-attended major campus and community occasion.

Thomas Wolfe is best known for his novel *Look Homeward, Angel*, which was published to rave reviews in 1929. Before his death in 1938, Wolfe also published *Of Time and the River* (1935). His novels *The Web and the Rock* (1939) and *You Can't Go Home Again* (1940) were published posthumously. Wolfe's writings reflect a largeness of spirit and an expansive vision of life, while anchored in geographic place.

Sponsors for the event include the Thomas Wolfe Society, individual donors, and the Department of English and Comparative Literature. The prize money comes from the Thomas Wolfe Endowment Fund. UNC Alumnus Ben Jones (class of 1950) gave the medals that each recipient receives.

SCHOLARS VISIT UNC

CRITICAL SPEAKER SERIES

The department continues to promote scholarly discourse—
and is doing so across modalities by offering talks
in person and online.

Each year, some of the finest scholars across the country participate in the Critical Speaker Series, a graduate-student-run effort intended to strengthen the intellectual community at Carolina through rigorous discourse and exploration of cutting-edge ideas.

Featuring outstanding and innovative scholars in the literary humanities, the series showcases some of the most exciting research being done today for the larger university community and the public. In the 2021–2022 series, each speaker delivered a lecture followed by a workshop for students. Though several speakers delivered their talks in person, the remainder participated over Zoom.

FOLLOW THE CRITICAL SPEAKER SERIES:

@SeriesCritical

@CriticalSpeakerSeries

Anjuli Fatima Raza Kolb

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dr. Raza Kolb's research and teaching focus on postcolonial literature and theory, the history of science and the environmental humanities, poetry and poetics, and gender and sexuality studies. Her recent book, *Epidemic Empire: Colonialism, Contagion, and Terror, 1817–2020*, published by the University of Chicago Press in 2020, investigates the metaphorical connection between terrorism and contagion and applies a postcolonial literary perspective to the global War on Terror.

Dorothy J. Hale

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Dr. Hale's research and teaching focus on the Anglo-American novel, theories of the novel, and problems of novelistic form. Her most recent book, *The Novel and the New Ethics*, published by Stanford University Press in 2020, explores how the contemporary emphasis on the social value of the novel has its roots in modernism's emphasis on narrative form, and especially in the work of Henry James.

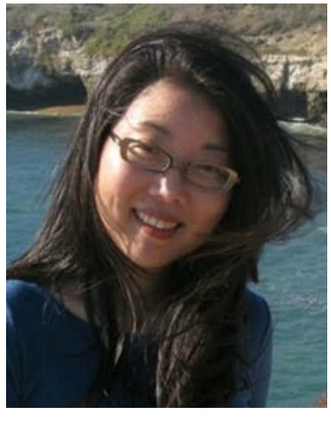
Kevin Quashie

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
BROWN UNIVERSITY

Dr. Quashie teaches Black cultural and literary studies and is a professor in the Department of English at Brown University. Primarily, he focuses on Black feminism, queer studies, and aesthetics, especially poetics. He is the author or editor of four books, most recently *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (2012) and *Black Aliveness, or A Poetics of Being* (2021). Currently, he is thinking about a book of Black sentences and Black ideas.

Christine Hong

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE,
CRITICAL RACE AND ETHNIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ



Dr. Hong's political commentary has appeared in *The Nation* and on Democracy Now! and Al Jazeera. She specializes in transnational Asian American, Korean diaspora, US war and empire, and comparative ethnic studies. She recently published *A Violent Peace: Race, US Militarism, and Cultures of Democratization in Cold War Asia and the Pacific* (Stanford University Press, 2020).

HEALTH MEETS THE HUMANITIES AT HHIVE

Dr. Mara Buchbinder and Dr. Mike Winstead make rounds as part of HHIVE's lecture series.

Launched in 2016 as a provost-funded Carolina Seminar, Health Humanities Grand Rounds brings together faculty and graduate and undergraduate students from across UNC divisions and departments to discuss research related to human health. A project of Health and Humanities: An Interdisciplinary Venue for Exploration (HHIVE), the series welcomed two scholars from the UNC medical school this year.

Mike Winstead, MD, is an assistant professor of pediatrics specializing in pediatric hematology-oncology and bone marrow transplantation. He is interested in the immune system as an intellectual development of the mid-twentieth century and in the social interactions of immunity, health, and illness. In his talk, "The Transplanted Self: Genetics, Race, and Pragmatism in Stem Cell Transplantation," Dr. Winstead considered stem cell transplantation as a social determinant of health.

Dr. Mara Buchbinder is a professor and vice chair of the Department of Social Medicine, adjunct professor of Anthropology, and core faculty in the Center for Bioethics at UNC-Chapel Hill. In her talk, "Scripting Death: Stories of Assisted Dying in America," Dr. Buchbinder presented key findings from her new book about how the legalization of assisted dying is changing possibilities for choice and control at the end of life—and in doing so, changing the kind of event we understand death to be.

WARRIORS INTO SCHOLARS

Hilary Lithgow leads an intensive program to welcome enlisted service members and veterans to Carolina.

The Warrior-Scholar Project "hosts intensive, one- and two-week college-preparatory academic boot camps for enlisted veterans and transitioning service members." The program's goal is to help veterans "acquire the skills to succeed in higher education and navigate the cultural shift from military service to college."

Ira Wilder/UNC-Chapel Hill

In a week-long humanities intensive this July, Professor Hilary Lithgow led the Warrior-Scholar Project for incoming student veterans at UNC. For Lithgow, the program is about helping student veterans situate themselves within a scholarly community:

"The main experience that I hope the students take away by the end of each summer program is the experience of feeling like they are part of a community of scholars able to read, discuss, and write about difficult material that's relevant to the history of democracy, relevant to the history of scholarly inquiry, and relevant to their everyday lives."

UNC has been offering the Warrior-Scholar Project summer boot camp in the humanities since 2015, and Lithgow has assisted with the project since its first year on campus. Over the years, Lithgow says, she has "come to learn much more about student veterans and the incredible diversity of experiences that people who serve in the military have and bring to the undergraduate classroom."

"I keep in touch with a wide range of alumni of the Warrior-Scholar Project who are in college at other places or are graduated and working. Learning where [students] go afterward helps me be more of a resource for the Warrior-Scholar when they come into my classroom. I can have a better sense of where they're coming from and also give them some previews of some paths they might take once they complete the program and even after they finish their college degrees," says Lithgow.

Faculty, staff, and students who are civilians can take part in UNC's Green Zone Training, which "trains members of the Carolina community to know more about the issues and concerns faced by military-affiliated students and to identify individuals who are available to assist this population."

—*Rose Steptoe*

THE STUDENT BECOMES THE TEACHER

Alumna Julia Ridley Smith returns to Carolina as the 2021–2022 Kenan Visiting Writer.

Though many Carolina graduates fantasize about returning to UNC as professors, few actually achieve that dream. Not so for Julia Ridley Smith, who joined the faculty this fall as the 2021–2022 Kenan Visiting Writer.

It's been a pretty good year for Smith, whose memoir in essays, *The Sum of Trifles*, was recently published by the University of Georgia Press. It's her first book, though her short stories and essays have been appearing for years in venues such as the *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *American Literary Review*, *Arts and Letters*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Chelsea*, *Ecotone*, *Electric Literature*, *Greensboro Review*, *New England Review*, *Southern Cultures*, and *The Southern Review*, among other places.

Legendary Southern writer Jill McCorkle had the following praise for *The Sum of Trifles*:

"Julia Ridley Smith's *The Sum of Trifles* is a beautifully crafted, elegiac journey. These essays—memories and mysteries of the author's eccentric parents and their eclectic collections, as well as moving meditations on writing, marriage, and motherhood—are rich and compelling. A wonderful exploration of grief and the joy left behind."

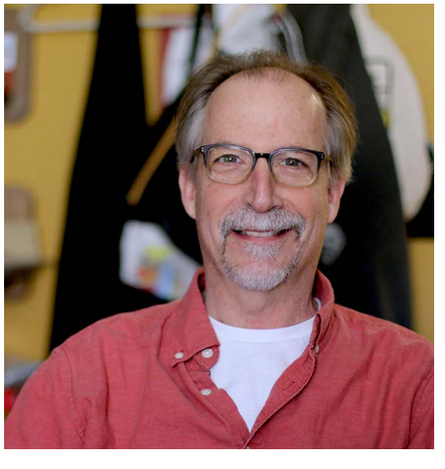
Smith's book received glowing reviews in various outlets, including the local publication *INDY Week*.

The Kenan Visiting Writer program allows a noteworthy emerging writer working on a second book to teach one course per semester at UNC. Clearly, teaching at Carolina proved to be a good fit for Smith: she's agreed to return next year to teach both fiction and nonfiction courses.

FACULTY BRIEFS

Associate Professor, W. E. B. Du Bois-Mellon Fellow, and Johnson Fellow Rebecka Rutledge Fisher began her tenure as the Spring 2022 Faculty Fellow at UNC's Institute for African American Research (IAAR) in January. The fellowship includes a $7,500 award. Rutledge Fisher delivered her IAAR Faculty Fellow Lecture, titled "The Sublime Revelation of W. E. B. Du Bois's St. Orgne the Damned," in March.

Teaching Associate Professor and Director of Digital Literacy and Communications Lab Courtney Rivard was awarded the Schwab Academic Excellence Award from the Institute for the Arts and Humanities. The award recognizes "outstanding scholarship or creative activity" in the humanities and qualitative social sciences.

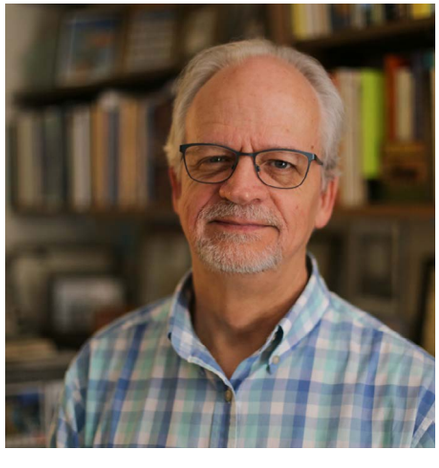


J. Ross MacDonald Distinguished Professor Daniel Wallace will be inducted into the Alabama Writers Hall of Fame in June. Professor Emeritus Trudier Harris will also be inducted. Wallace concludes an eleven-year stint as director of creative writing this year. His memoir, *This Isn't Going to End Well*, has been acquired by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Eugene H. Falk Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the UNC Latina/o Studies Program María DeGuzmán had a photo-text story published in *Tiny Seed Journal*, a photographic poem published in *Roanoke Review*, and a visual poem, a spoken word and music rendition of the poem, and an interview published in *TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics*.

William S. Newman Distinguished Professor Philip Gura's latest book, *With Liberty OR Justice for All: Edwards, Emerson, James, Rawls*, has been accepted for publication by the University of Georgia Press.

Doris Betts Term Professor Michael McFee's new collection of poems, *A Long Time to Be Gone*, will be published by Carnegie Mellon University Press next fall.



Associate Professor and Director of the Office of Distinguished Scholarships Inger Brodey, along with PhD student Anne Fertig, received a North Carolina Humanities Council Grassroots Grant as well as a grant from the Carolina Asia Center for a Jane Austen & Co. web series, "Asia & the Regency," which ran through April 2022.

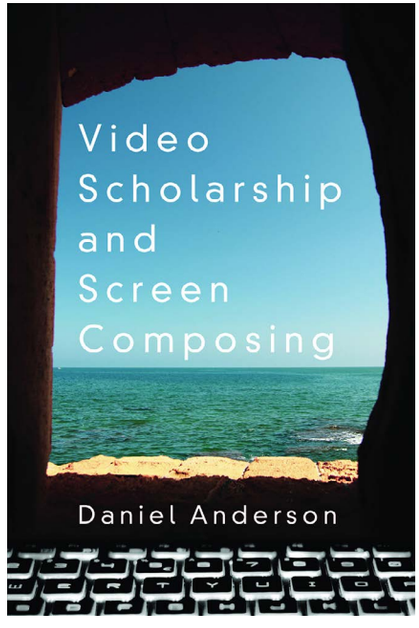
Associate Professor and Walker Percy Fellow Gabrielle Calvocoressi had a poem, "She Ties My Bowtie," appear in *The New York Times Magazine*.

Teaching Assistant Professor Ross White was recognized with a Student Undergraduate Teaching and Staff Award (SUTASA). SUTASA was established in 1989 to recognize outstanding undergraduate instruction by both faculty and teaching assistants.

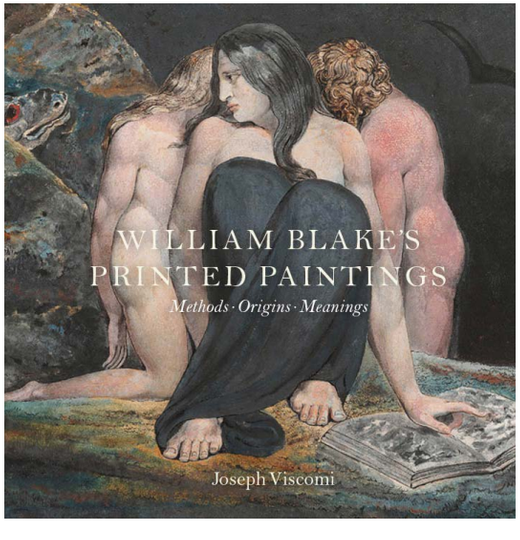
NEW BOOKS FROM THE DEPARTMENT

DANIEL ANDERSON

Video Scholarship and Screen Composing



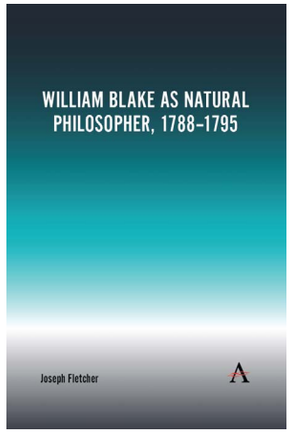
This video book asks questions about traditional composition approaches, calling attention to the competitive ways that scholars typically engage one another; the ways that scholarship often aims for closure rather than opening up meaning; and the ways that media shape understanding through complex emotional registers. As it explores these questions, *Video Scholarship and Screen Composing* demonstrates digital rhetoric's potential to reach learners in ways that augment and enhance what text can accomplish. (University of Michigan Press)



JOSEPH VISCOMI

William Blake's Printed Paintings: Methods, Origins, Meanings

A technical, historical, and interpretive examination of Blake's masterworks, the twelve large color prints of 1795, and their twenty-nine extant impressions. (Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art/Yale University Press)



JOSEPH FLETCHER

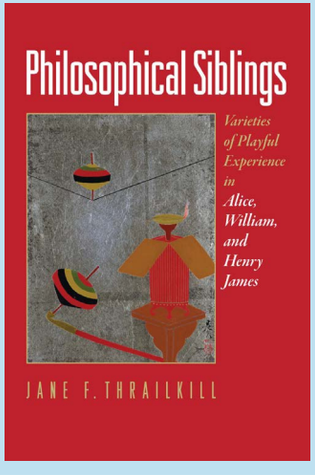
William Blake as Natural Philosopher, 1788–1795

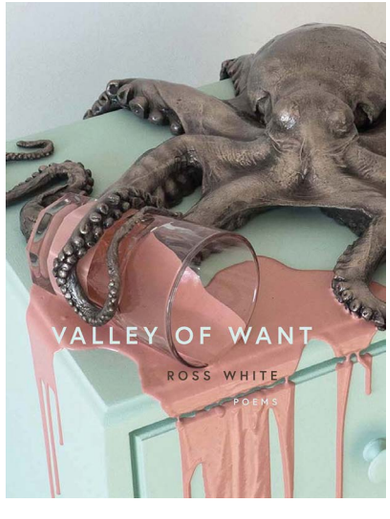
This book takes seriously William Blake's wish to be read as a natural philosopher, particularly in his early illuminated works, and reveals the way that poetry and visual art were for Blake an imaginative way of philosophizing. (Anthem)

JANE THRAILKILL

Philosophical Siblings: Varieties of Playful Experience in Alice, William, and Henry James

Henry James, novelist. William James, Harvard philosopher. Alice James, diary-keeper. This book tells the story of three extraordinary writers—members of a close-knit, public-spirited family at the close of the nineteenth century—who saw play as essential to human psychology. (University of Pennsylvania Press)





ROSS WHITE

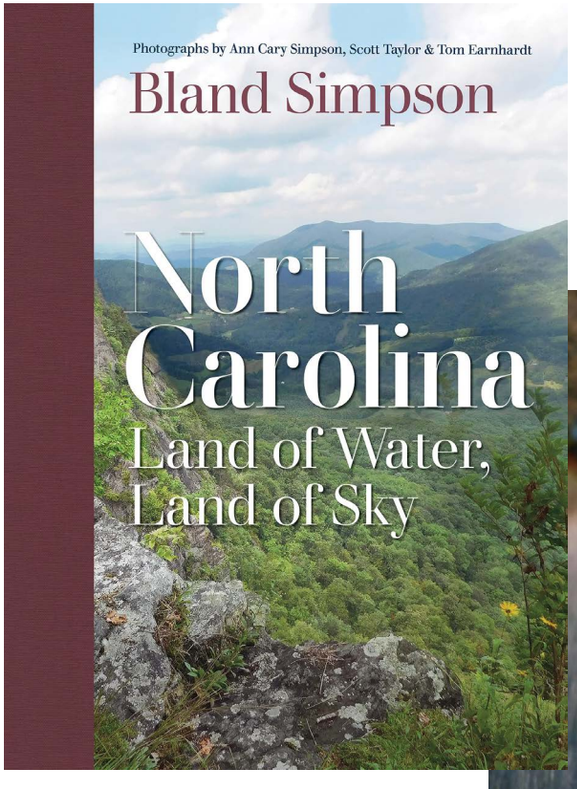
Valley of Want

Valley of Want, Ross White's third collection of poems, is a song in celebration of the difficulty of naming, of seeing, of putting one's finger on the elusive thing one feels is true. Graceful and witty, these poems are grounded in the thrilling stillness of nature and the contours of human connection through our self-performances, through our monsters, through our stories, through the language that makes us unmistakably ourselves. (Unicorn Press)

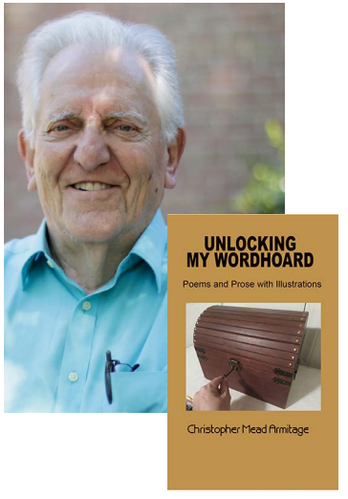
BLAND SIMPSON

North Carolina: Land of Water, Land of Sky

Kenan Distinguished Professor of English and Creative Writing Bland Simpson's book, *North Carolina: Land of Water, Land of Sky*, blends "history, observation of nature, and personal narrative [. . .] to chronicle the people and places of eastern Carolina." Working with his wife and creative partner, Ann Cary Simpson, professional photographer Scott Taylor, and writer and naturalist Tom Earnhardt, Simpson documents the natural beauty of North Carolina, continuing the work begun in *The Coasts of Carolina* (2010), *Two Captains from Carolina* (2012), and *Little Rivers and Waterway Tales, A Carolinian's Eastern Streams* (2015). (University of North Carolina Press)



Ann Cary Simpson, photographer, served for thirty years at national and North Carolina environmental organizations and UNC's School of Government. She now is a senior associate with moss + ross strategic consulting.



CHRISTOPHER ARMITAGE

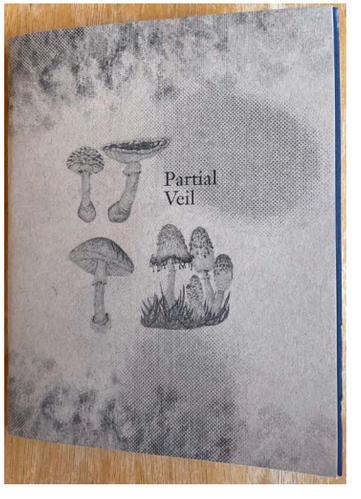
Unlocking My Wordhoard: Poems and Prose with Illustrations

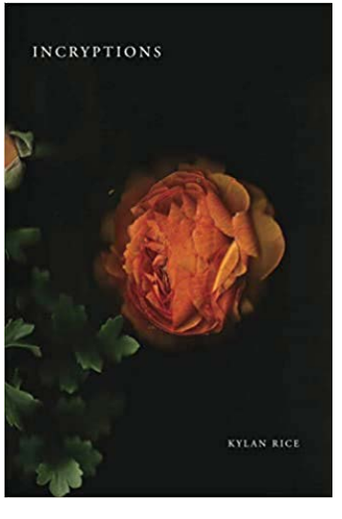
Borrowing its title from a translation of Beowulf, Professor Emeritus Armitage's new collection concerns itself with historical and public matters, odes to famous poets and their work, and heartfelt work. Its prose sections explore such subjects as a child exposed to war, studying with C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, and participation in sports and theatrical productions. (Grateful Steps Foundation)

JOSEPH FLETCHER

Partial Veil

You're not seeing double—Joseph Fletcher had two books come out this year. Released in February, this chapbook of poems is the first Riso edition from a chapbook series from a Triangle-area-focused reading series. (Romance Press)



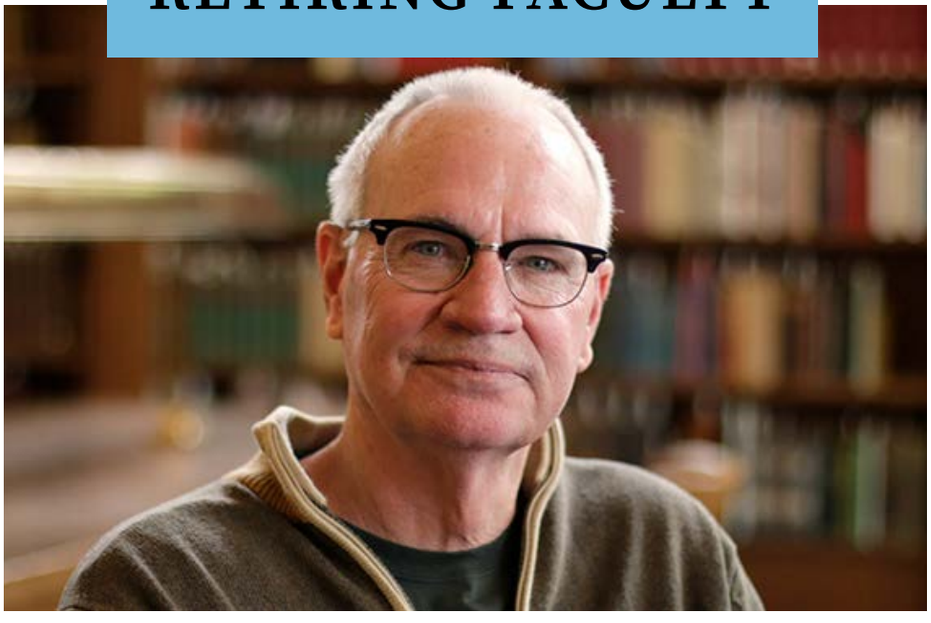


KYLAN RICE

Incryptions

Seamlessly marrying myriad influences, PhD student Kylan Rice's first collection of poems travels a world full of imagistic flourish. Dan Beachy-Quick says, "Part mystic, part sober-eyed skeptic, but poet through-and-through, Rice invites us into the mystery of our lives, helps us point at what is hidden, opens the crypt, gives us a hand as he helps us climb in." Rice's second collection is due in 2023 and he currently teaches poetry writing courses for the department. (Spuyten Duyvil Press)

RETIRING FACULTY



MICHAEL CHITWOOD

"After a semester with Chitwood, poetry made sense to me as it never had before—there was now an integrity between living and writing that I hadn't conceived." —Evan Gurney

"Michael's devotion to poetry and skills as a mentor changed the lives of his students. Many, never exploring the art of poetry, now are deeply engaged . . . . What a wonderful gift Michael has bestowed upon them. He will be missed by students, his fellow teachers and certainly by me. He will always remain my friend and colleague." —Bob Young

"As a poet and colleague, Michael Chitwood has long been one of my reliable favorites. His poems are quiet masterpieces chronicling working-class Appalachia, interrogating the joys and dangers of labor with profound sensitivity. How lucky we are to have enjoyed his camaraderie for twenty-four years, during which time he has proven to be a warm and insightful mentor to writers. He has modeled for those students the patience and diligence necessary to be a working writer by continuing to publish a new collection every few years. We'll miss him terribly." —Ross White

"I was in Michael Chitwood's intermediate poetry class in 2004, or thereabouts. My memory of the room where we met is that it was narrow and hard—those narrow brutalist Greenlaw windows—and yet somehow Michael managed to make us feel like we were participating in a notable salon. After class, we would gather under the concrete eaves, reluctant to leave, reluctant to stop talking about what poetry was, what it could do, what we could do with it. Michael gave me my first introduction to poetry as community, and to UNC as a place I could find that community—I'm still in it, and I'm grateful to him." —Marielle Prince

"Twenty years ago, Susan Irons sat across a desk from me—she was working at the Business School then, I think; there was some arcane complication with her records at the Graduate School and I was Graduate Director. It was just a form that needed a signature or maybe a call—all part of my job, but Susan had made an appointment to come in and thank me in person, which, if you know Susan, is just what Susan does. I had heard about her for years since I'd joined the department—the way you would hear about . . . I don't know whom—a beloved teacher? Or minister? Dean Smith? Everybody's favorite hometown celebrity, maybe the tv weather person? 'Oh—you don't know *Susan Irons*?' asked with a shake of the head, just that little disbelief. . . . Susan is the best of Carolina. Everyone at the University feels that way. She has made this place home. How many times has she known what to do when I've called her? Susan always knows what to do—she's the one who made sure, at his graduation party, that my son got thank-you notes in his new college colors. Because twenty years ago Susan did not just become my friend—she became my sister." —Laurie Langbauer

"Susan has put her mentoring and sisterly arm around me metaphorically and literally countless times. . . . Her kindness is matched by her humility and her genuine appreciation and admiration for others." —Liz Gualtieri-Reed

"I am not sure how Susan Irons has done all that she has done and continues to do: patient and attentive to students and colleagues passing by her open door, orchestrating visits and beautiful events with the greatest of ease, being aware of what needs doing before it even needs doing, and all the while looking like she stepped off a runway in the latest fashion of cool and calm. Susan Irons is the Mary Poppins of Academics and how lucky and grateful we are to witness her sparkling magic!" —Jill McCorkle

SUSAN IRONS

MAGGIE O'SHAUGHNESSEY

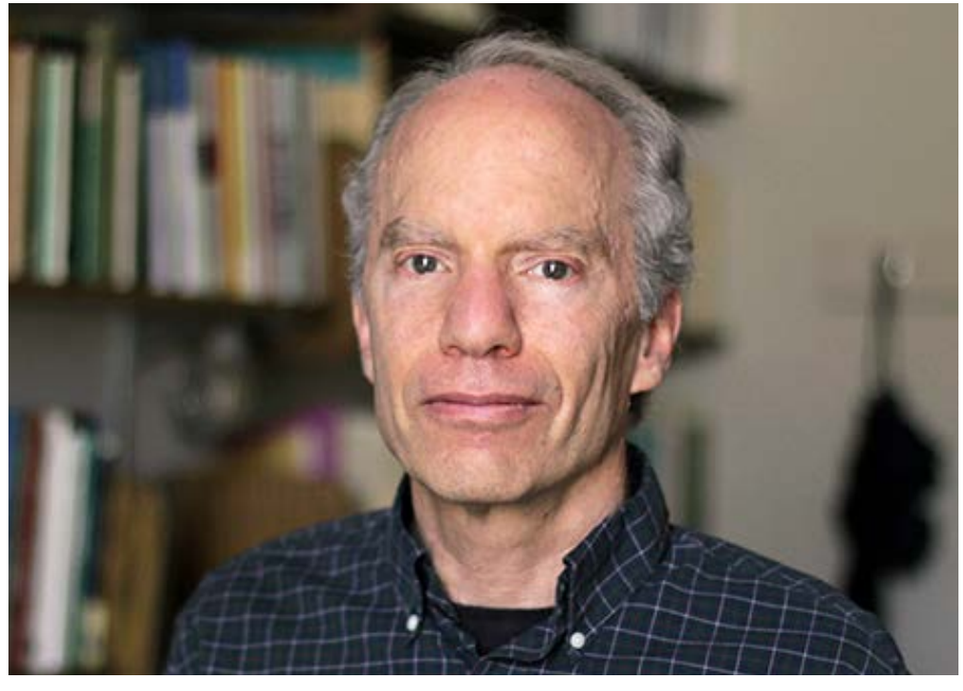
"Maggie O'Shaughnessey is a force for good and a force of nature—like the river that feeds the valley, maybe, or the sun: quiet, sustaining, powerful. Maggie is like that. She gets things going—yes—but totally without fuss and more like they would happen on some epic, archetypal plane, like the universe intended, like no one else could do them. Only they just seem to happen; you never hear about it. Thank you, Maggie. We have been so lucky to live in a world mapped by you." —Laurie Langbauer

"Boundless thanks to Maggie for the abundant ways she has enriched our department and our lives during her years on the Carolina faculty. Her professionalism, her generosity of spirit, her capacity for analysis and process, her sense of fairness, and her supportive friendship—we all benefitted in immeasurable ways. Many of us have enjoyed Maggie's sustaining friendship and the joy of working with a friend. I miss those Greenlaw conversations that ranged from teaching issues to topics across the political spectrum. I found her support through some major moments particularly sustaining (what to say to your class the morning after an earthshaking election?), and I know others did also." —Susan Irons

"Maggie's example of someone always seeking to augment and diversify her readings and course materials shamed me and spurred me, I hope, to be a better teacher and more active learner. Sharing an office with her, I sometimes overheard her conversations with students, and saw her course materials. They were always intriguing and inspiring. She has a special knack for making everything course-related obviously relevant to contemporary life. For someone whose professional life is always situated in the nineteenth century, I've learned a great deal from Maggie about reaching students and making course material speak to them. (But I'm still wondering how I can work in buckeyes for Victorian study!) Maggie justifiably won a teaching award from A.P.P.L.E.S. She will be sorely missed by students who don't even know her." —Beverly Taylor

"I would like to praise Tom for four reasons. 1) His book on Samuel Johnson is wonderful; I admired its concepts so much that I recklessly appropriated them for my own scholarship. 2) He is one of the department's most splendid and versatile teachers; students seem just universally to adore him—and for all the right reasons. 3) When he speaks at a departmental meeting, it tends to matter. 4) As a member of the editorial board of a major academic journal, he reads every submission that he receives within 24 hours. His readings are careful and helpful as well as breathtakingly speedy. He turns articles around so quickly out of a compassion for those young scholars for whom a protracted vetting process might prove devastating for job prospects or tenure. His 24-hour rule is easily one of the most amazing habits I have ever observed in a colleague." —Reid Barbour

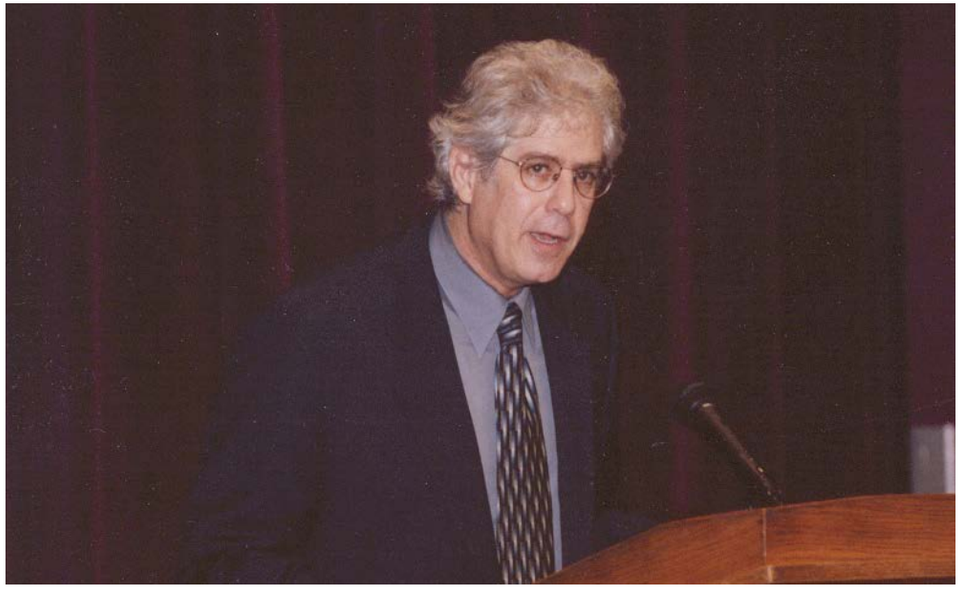
TOM REINERT



"I have never had a conversation with Tom that wasn't by turns funny, intellectually invigorating, and emotionally satisfying—the last because he is so curious about other people and so willing to participate in their pleasures, enthusiasms, angers, and irritations." —Beth Newman

"Working with Tom on graduate committees has been one of the great pleasures of my career at UNC. He is gracious, generous, kind, and immensely learned." —Beverly Taylor

"It's meant a lot to see him steadily, something I could be sure of, a stay to me throughout the years. Tom's been important that way in our department too, a presence we could count on, that made our endeavors meaningful because he found in them such significance—showed them to be ideas and debate that made a difference. With his retirement, I feel like the mighty have walked from the earth. . ." —Laurie Langbauer



JAMES THOMPSON

"I feel very fortunate to have had James Thompson as my professor, chair, and mentor. When I first arrived at UNC as an M.A. student way back in 1987, James was known in the halls of Greenlaw as a 'young gun'—the enigmatic Marxist who rode a motorcycle. . . . I learned a lot from his leadership, most especially that doing a good job takes sustained labor and commitment. James remains a trusted confidant who continues to inspire me with his goodwill and humor (as well as his reliable praise of whatever shoes I may be wearing)." —Mary Floyd-Wilson

"One of my happiest memories of graduate school is the eighteenth-century novels seminar that James co-taught with Beverly Taylor. We worked our way from Richardson to Burney to Austen. Watching James and Beverly debate the relative merits of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet was as sidesplitting as it was revelatory of the great delight we can take in one another's intellectual company. At the time, I didn't understand how precious this is, but every day confirms it. When I ask my students, 'Why does it matter that this is a novel?'—James's abiding question—I am filled with gratitude for his teaching, his eloquent humor, and his deep love for the humanities and all of us." —Sarah Marsh

"His care for the public side of the profession—his 'good citizenship'—reflects in part the public dimension of his intellectual enthusiasm. He likes reading and thinking as phases of social engagement, not just as forms of private entertainment. He follows debates in professional journals as someone who eagerly wants to take part in them. For him, they are immediate, vivid, and real. When he likes newly discovered critics and theorists, he is awash in enthusiasm, and when he doesn't like them, he feels downcast. It's personal for him; it's as if the writers were all his friends." —Tom Reinert

"James Thompson saved my sanity more times than I can count." —Adam McKible

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

SERVING SENIORS IN A TIME OF NEED

Elizabeth Shand adapted to the pandemic by broadcasting educational content to senior care facilities.

In the summer of 2019, Liz Shand submitted a proposal to the UNC Partnerships in Aging Program, which was collaborating with Galloway Ridge—a senior living community in Pittsboro, NC—to offer educational opportunities for its residents. Shand's proposal: "The History of the Book." It was to be a seven-week lecture series, one designed to replicate a classroom presentation about the book as a material object. The series would feature videos (about bookbinding, ink-printing, and the industrialization and digitization of books) and interactions with the material, including a visit with UNC's Special Collections. Shand's proposal was accepted, with a plan to begin the series in March 2020.

And then the pandemic hit.

And it hit the aging community incredibly hard. As the nation came to grips with a staggering death toll due to the COVID-19 virus—with many dying at a disproportionate rate in long-term care and senior living communities—Shand was still dedicated to providing outreach opportunities to Galloway Ridge residents. Working closely with Galloway Ridge's program director, Shand transitioned her lecture series to adapt to pandemic protocols. As such, her discussion of the history of the book would be broadcast as part of the television programming of Galloway Ridge. (Due to accessibility issues among some residents, Zoom was not an automatic option for the delivery of programming.) Shand's series gave residents a much-needed outlet during a time of isolation, as many long-term care facilities prohibited visitations in an effort to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

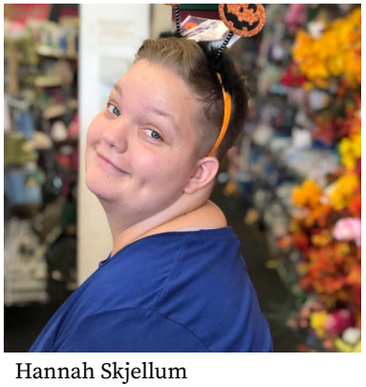
Shand's presentations became part of a greater goal of providing continuing education opportunities to a community so often marginalized and excluded from social and cultural development. Despite the inability to interact with the residents, Shand's series was a hit.

"There seems to be an age-based cutoff in education, and it shouldn't be that way," Shand said. Her advice for teaching within the aging population is to remember to connect with them as a peer. "You don't have to simplify the content. Take them seriously and appreciate what they know." —*Mindy Buchanan-King*

PhD candidate Nicole Berland was selected for a 2022 DEFCon (Digital Ethnic Futures) Mentorship Grant. Berland will spend eight months assisting a teaching fellowship recipient with curriculum design and implementation.

PhD candidate Rachel Warner won a Dissertation Completion Fellowship from the graduate school for the 2021–2022 academic year for her dissertation "Inverts, Tomboys, and Drag Kings: Female Masculinities in Modernist American Literature and Culture."

Adhy Kim



Hannah Skjellum

The Graduate Lecture Series offered a robust series of talks featuring some of the most exciting research happening in the department right now. Offered talks included:

- Adhy Kim: "The Korean Demilitarized Zone as a Speculative Landscape"
- Kristján Hannesson: "Tabula Infecta: Petrarch, Pliny and the Aesthetics of the Catastrophe"
- Hannah Skjellum: "'His Light Will Shine On': Randall Kenan's Cultivations of Queer Black Souths in Writing and Life"
- Bailey Fernandez: "On Purpose: Chris Burden and the Philosophy of Action"
- Ryan Carroll: "Fictionality, Queer Archival Research, and the Utopianism of Literary Criticism"
- Lindsay Ragle-Miller: "Polyamory in Boccaccio's *Decameron*"

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Ariannah Kubli and Jane McGrail were awarded the Maynard Adams Fellowship for the Public Humanities for 2021–2022.

The Carolina Public Humanities awards the Maynard Adams Fellowship to ten students whose research is in the humanities, fine arts, or social studies and encourages public engagement in its graduate experience and future careers.

Ariannah Kubli is a second-year PhD student in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, where she specializes in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American literature. Her current research explores the interplay between fiction, labor movements, and radical politics in the United States from 1880 to 1920.

Jane McGrail is a PhD student and teaching fellow focusing on rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies. Her research focuses on the relationship between community literacy and the public humanities. She aims to make the study of the humanities more widely accessible and is a previous recipient of the Humanities for the Public Good Fellowship and the Humanities Professional Pathway Award at UNC.

For Kubli, engaging in the public humanities follows naturally from her conviction that "the humanities play a vital role in personal, social, and political growth." She says: "My goal as a public humanist is to democratize access to the transformative humanistic discussions usually sealed within university walls."

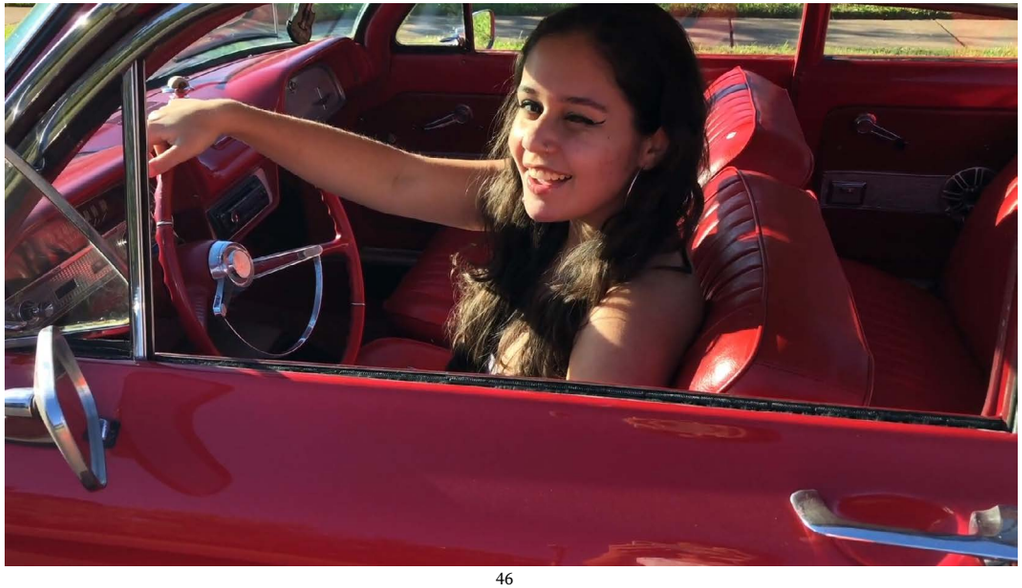
McGrail approaches the fellowship as a way of building bridges between UNC and the broader community. "I come at this work from a perspective on social justice and equity because I believe that it is through interfacing with the university, and the humanities specifically, that people can . . . find the skills they need to thrive in modern society," she says. "I believe that the public humanities have the capacity to improve equity by lowering the barriers to participation in university-level thinking and learning."

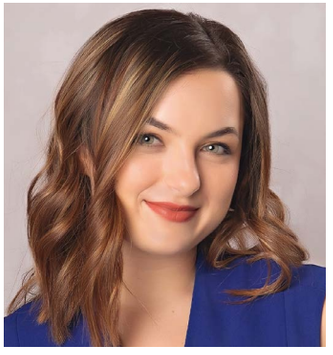
Fellows are selected from various UNC humanities departments. Each develops a humanities project that brings academic research to the public. —*Ryan Carroll*

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Luisa Peñaflor, a first-year creative writing major from Simpsonville, SC, is the 2021 Thomas Wolfe Scholarship recipient. The full, four-year merit scholarship is awarded to incoming students with exceptionally focused literary ability and promise. Members of the scholarship committee said Peñaflor "seems like a writer whose talent she prefers to keep under the radar—just the sort of applicant this scholarship is intended to track down." —*Rose Steptoe*

Talitha Moniz McMillon, an English and Comparative Literature and Dramatic Arts double major, won third place in the Young Filmmakers Contest hosted by the Jane Austen Society of North America. McMillon's "Strength and Vulnerability" incorporates Ariana Grande's song "Thank U, Next" as sung by a variety of Austen heroines. McMillon created the film in Professor Inger Brodey's Jane Austen course. The film still below features Elizabeth Bennet.





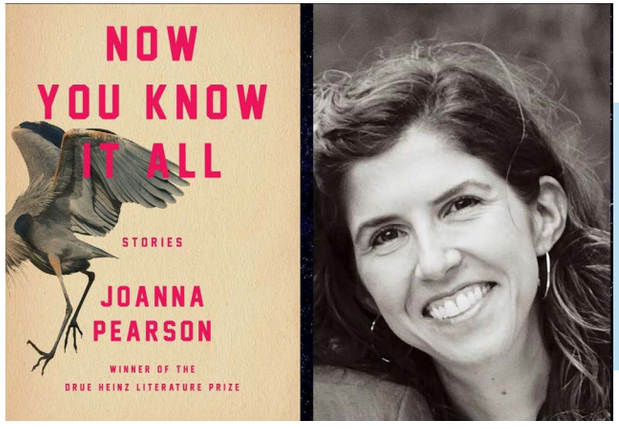
English and Comparative Literature and Music double major Kennedy Miller was awarded the prestigious Marshall Scholarship. The Marshall Scholarship funds graduate study in the United Kingdom for "intellectually distinguished" American students so that they may "act as ambassadors from the USA to the UK and vice versa throughout their lives." Miller is UNC-Chapel Hill's twenty-second Marshall scholar.

Seven English and Comparative Language majors were accepted into the Alpha of North Carolina Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. Founded in 1776, Phi Beta Kappa is the oldest national honors society in the United States and retains a prestigious reputation for valuing liberal arts education while celebrating academic excellence. Inductees were:

Megan Anderson Busbice
Michaela Faith Campbell
Emily Lauren Clemente
Katie Margaret Leonard
Jamie Marie Lukow
Lucas Kennedy
Li-Anne W. Wright

Students in Professor Florence Dore's ENGL 408 Songwriting course dubbed themselves "The Good Spellers" and held two main performances: one at the Farmer's Market and, at the end of term, at Imbibe. The students drew such a crowd at the latter performance and sounded so good that the bartender begged them to come back for another gig. During a difficult semester at UNC—first term back in person, when mental health became a focus—these students wrote dozens of songs, employing creativity and form to access key aspects of the human experience. They recorded a self-titled album, available for free through Bandcamp. **Click here to listen and download.**

ALUMNI UPDATES

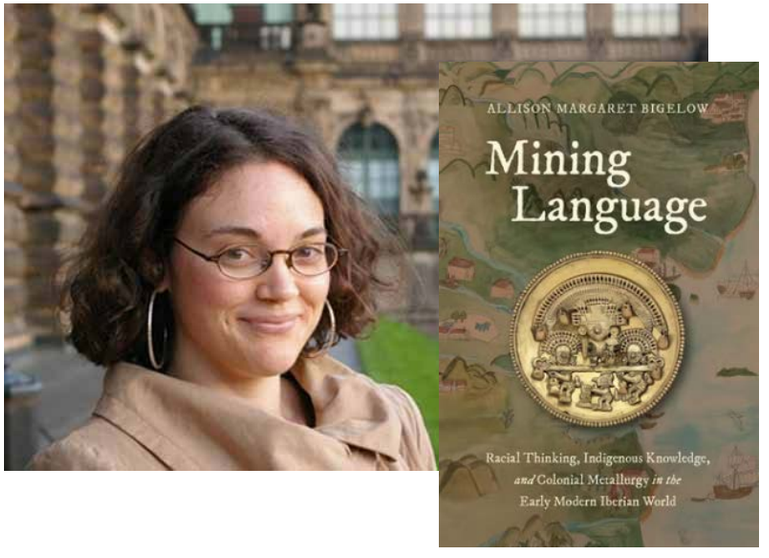


Joanna Pearson's *Now You Know It All* was chosen by Edward P. Jones for the 2021 Drue Heinz Literature Prize. According to *Publisher's Weekly*, "Pearson's stories glide through their alarming moments with a precision hard to look away from. This will transfix and unsettle."

Anuradha Bhowmik of Philadelphia, PA, is the 2021 winner of the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize for her collection *Brown Girl Chromatography*, selected by new Starrett Poetry Prize judge and award-winning poet Aaron Smith. Bhowmik, a Bangladeshi American poet and writer from South Jersey, will be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in the Pitt Poetry Series in fall 2022. *Brown Girl Chromatography* is shaped by Bhowmik's life as a Bangladeshi-born American girl and woman growing up as a first-generation immigrant in the United States.

Woodsmoke by Wayne Caldwell is a new poetry collection that renders the experience of living out life in a single, exquisite place—"in the shadow of the mountain my father said was mother to us all"—Mount Pisgah in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. In colloquial narrative poems, Caldwell, also the author of the novel *Cataloochee*, explores the waning days of Posey Green, who cuts his own firewood, looks after himself, and tends to the land where his wife, Birdie, and her people are buried.

MINING LANGUAGE WINS MLA FIRST BOOK AWARD



Allison Bigelow, an alumna of the Department of English and Comparative Literature doctoral program and Tom Scully Discovery Chair Associate Professor of Spanish at University of Virginia, won the MLA Prize for a First Book.

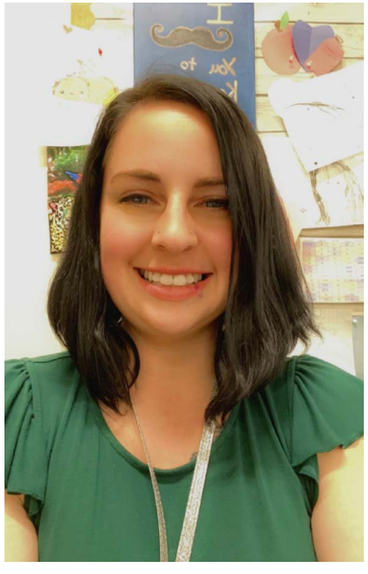
Dr. Bigelow's first book, *Mining Language: Racial Thinking, Indigenous Knowledge, and Colonial Metallurgy in the Early Modern Iberian World*, "is the first book-length study of the technical and scientific vocabularies that miners developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as they engaged with metallic materials."

Asked what inspired the book, Bigelow answered, "After I finished my undergrad degrees in Spanish and English, I moved abroad and began teaching English and providing language services (translation, simultaneous interpretation) in Chile. At first, I was placed in Santiago as a consultant at global multinational firms like Citibank, Proctor & Gamble, and 3M. After six months, I moved to a 'hardship' position working on-site in BHP-Billiton's Cerro Colorado asset. Two miners walked past me and one said, looking at me but ostensibly talking to his friend, 'Oye hueón está tan rica la mina.' This could mean 'that woman is really hot" or 'that mine has very good ore.' Although this was, in theory, a violation of company policy, it was also a very smart way to use the technical language of mining and metallurgy in order to say what he wanted to say. I suspected that historians of science may have missed some of the gendered, sexualized, and racialized ideologies that coursed through technical texts like instruction manuals, patent applications, and treatises, so I applied to grad school at UNC to see if my hypothesis was correct."

ALUMNA WINS TEACHER OF THE YEAR ACCOLADES

Brandy Varner was named Teacher of the Year at Chatham Grove Elementary School.

Brandy Varner, who graduated from the English and Comparative Literature program in 2010, was honored as Teacher of the Year at Chatham Grove Elementary School. She has been teaching for eleven years and joined Chatham Grove upon the school's opening last year. She chatted with the department about using her degree as a teacher.



How would you describe your approach to teaching?

"I consider my primary goal to be helping children grow into active, compassionate members of society so I try to plan all of my lessons through that lens. I definitely use my Comp-Lit skills on a daily basis as well and I think they are a large part of what makes me an effective teacher. Spending four years analyzing text and getting to know authors and the societies they lived in through their words made me a more empathetic person and critical thinker. I know that there are questions to be asked about every subject and multiple perspectives to interpret the world from and I work hard to pass that on to my students."

What does this award mean to you?

"This award was a surprise and an honor for me. I know that I work hard but I also know the hard work of my colleagues. So much of what I know comes back to being able to openly ask questions, share ideas, and learn from them. I couldn't believe they considered me a peer to be honored rather than 'that lady that's always bothering us with things.' Now, it's just time to appreciate their support and their respect and work hard to live up to that honor."

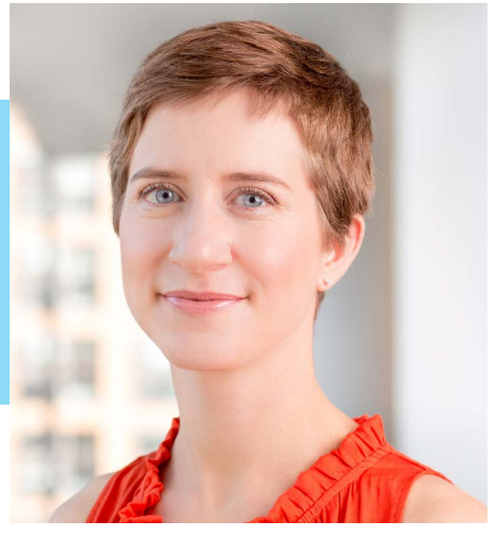
Do you have any advice for current English and Comparative Literature students considering teaching?

"It is a very hard job (you've probably seen all the headlines out there) and you most definitely need to love it but the best decision I ever made was deciding to teach. Your Comp-Lit skills are exactly what students need in this world. Take a wide variety of classes and expose yourself to literature from as many perspectives as possible so you bring all of that with you into the classroom.

I would also recommend keeping your mind open about what age group you want to teach. Personally, I thought I wanted to teach AP English and nothing else while I was still getting my degree. But, falling into elementary completely by chance, I fell in love with it."

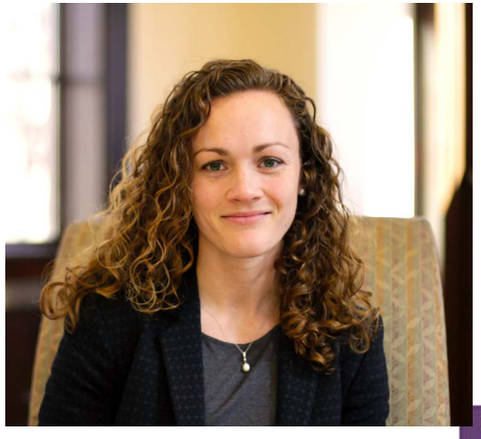
Hunter Toro served as a writer on NBC Peacock's comedy *True Story*, where "everyday Americans sit down with Ed Helms (*The Office*) and Randall Park (*WandaVision*) to share their most unbelievable true stories as they are cinematically reenacted by top comedians and actors, giving regular people the biopics they deserve." Toro also briefly appeared in the show in a scene, above, with Anders Holm (*Workaholics*). Her next show is due in 2023 on Comedy Central. Toro, who honed her writing and performance skills in the legendary Gram-O-Rama course, said, "I wish we could go back and show this all to scared UNC senior Hunter."

National Public Radio reporter Laurel Wamsley is a reporter for NPR's News Desk. She reports breaking news for NPR's digital coverage, newscasts, and news magazines, as well as occasional features. Her feature "Home Prices Are Up. For Black Families, Is Selling Grandma's House the Right Choice?" aired in December 2021.



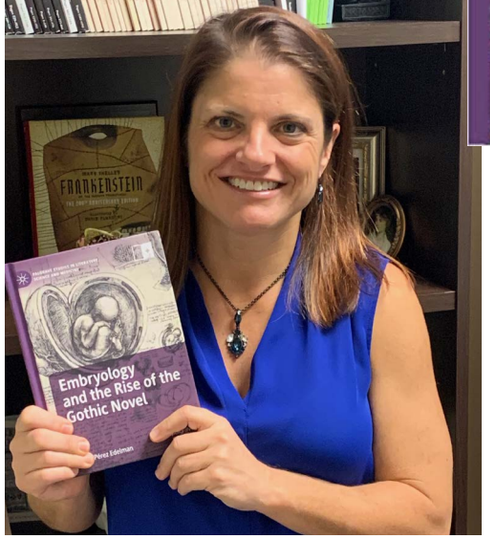
Allison Shelley / NPR

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: **click here to submit your news**.



Rachael Isom won a university-wide teaching award, the Faculty Achievement Award in Teaching, at Arkansas State University, where she is an Assistant Professor of English.

Kathleen Béres Rogers published *Creating Romantic Obsession: Scorpions in the Mind* (Palgrave, 2019). She is now an Associate Professor of English at the College of Charleston.



Diana Pérez Edelman has published *Embryology and the Rise of the Gothic Novel* (Palgrave, 2021). She is now an Associate Professor of English at the University of North Georgia at Gainesville.

ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

BY THE NUMBERS

573 course sections offered in 2021–2022

13,326 undergraduate enrollments in 2021–2022

525 declared English majors

129 courses offered in 2021–2022

111 graduate students

76 faculty

18 adjunct faculty

CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEPARTMENT

We strive to provide the best possible educational experience to our undergraduates and graduate students, to remain at the forefront of research in the arts and humanities, and to reach out to our constituents on campus, in our communities and state, and in the world at large. We're grateful for the support that helps us maintain these endeavors.

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