Dear Friends and Alumni,

As I reflect on academic year 2023-24, Chapel Hill welcomes Spring with an abundance of flowers riotous in color. A bumper crop of daffodils has ushered in joyous anticipation of graduation and all the celebrations that event brings each and every year, followed by summer’s slower pace before we start all over again.

This year has been one of many changes on our campus, at times tumultuous in nature and at other times changes that are quiet and filled with promise. We started with a horrific shooting, followed shortly afterward by a thwarted—thankfully—potential shooting incident, discovering that like so many campuses we are not exempt from the trauma of gun violence.

Our university leadership has changed—one chancellor left mid-year, an interim chancellor arrived afterward, followed by a chancellor search that has just begun. The university opened a new School for Civic Life and Learning. Political controversies on and beyond campus enlivened our lives and raised a host of issues about the challenges of opening and maintaining civil, meaningful discourse and working together to effect positive change.

In the Department of English and Comparative Literature, we continue to work together in community to provide the very best education for our students. We teach students to read and write thoughtfully, express themselves meaningfully through a variety of media, and conduct original research in archives, libraries, and online. As dedicated faculty we try to provide students with insight and knowledge in literature, publishing, creative writing, film studies, health humanities, digital humanities, Latina/o studies, comparative literature, and much more. These experiences will serve students well throughout their lives whether they major or minor in our department, or just take a few courses with us. I am proud of my colleagues as they continue to garner awards for exceptional teaching, produce award-winning scholarship, assume leadership positions in our profession, and push boundaries creatively on what we do as educators and how we go about it. We welcomed three new faculty members this year and we will welcome two more next year into our community. We are also fortunate to have superb graduate students and wonderful undergraduate students, who remind us every day of the joys of learning. They inspire and energize our world and make all of us hopeful for the future.

We are also fortunate in our terrific friends and alumni who support what we do year after year. We are so grateful for your generosity and enthusiasm. So I hope you will enjoy reading through the pages that follow and share the moment with us as we celebrate the milestones and achievements of our incredibly gifted English and Comparative Literature community. Thank you for helping us move forward in providing the very best in education, scholarship, and creativity in and through our department. Here’s to another great year!

With warm wishes,

Marsha S. Collins
Terrance Hayes, their sounds rich, their images astonishing, their work. His poetry, rooted in identity and personal experience, is unabashedly political; but his poems and politics constitute a portmanteau of poetics?" 

For decades, Hayes has been investigating the combination of those first two words in his powerful work. His poetry, rooted in identity and personal experience, is unabashedly political; but his poems are first and foremost poems, their language keen, their sounds rich, their images astonishing, their forms inventive and audacious. Everything he writes manages to, in Ezra Pound’s imperative, make it new, on the page and in the ear, which is what our very best lyric poets do—line by line, stanza by stanza, poem by poem. 

One of the most distinctive voices in contemporary American literature, Terrance Hayes is the author of seven books of poetry: So to Speak (2023); American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin (2018), winner of the Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry from the Library of Congress; How to Be Drawn (2015); Lighthead (2010), winner of the 2010 National Book Award in Poetry; Wind in a Box (2006); Hip Logic (2002), winner of the National Poetry Series; and Muscular Music (1999), winner of the Kate Tufts Discovery Award. He is also the author of To Float in the Space Between: A Life and Work in Conversation with the Life and Work of Etheridge Knight (2018), which won the Pegasus Award for Poetry Criticism.

He has received many other honors and awards, including a 2014 MacArthur Foundation Genius Grant, a Whiting Award in Poetry, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation. His poetry has appeared in such publications as the New Yorker, Poetry, and The American Poetry Review, among many others, and has also been featured on PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer. Hayes is a Professor of English and Creative Writing at New York University.

Whether in poetry or prose, each of Terrance Hayes’s books is an adventure, a passionate and ingenious variation on a central theme: what it means to be an artist and a Black man in America. “There are recurring explorations of identity and culture in my work,” Hayes writes, “and rather than deny my thematic obsessions, I work to change the forms in which I voice them.” “My essential poetics,” he writes in Watch Your Language, “is simply to be doing something, making something, playing, struggling, learning something. Practice and poetics are synonymous in my mind. Both are enhanced by variation: particularness, adaptability as well as resistance.”

No other poet working today is more exciting or deeply delightful to read; as Cornelius Eady says, “First you’ll marvel at his skill, his near-perfect pitch, his disarming humor, his brilliant turns of phrase. Then you’ll notice the grace, the tenderness, the unblinking truth-telling just beneath his lines, the open and generous way he takes in our world.”

For this mission, Cardman will be taking on the position as Commander aboard the Dragon spacecraft. This will be Cardman’s first time in space and will last 203 days, with the goal of this mission being to conduct research and contribute to operations aboard the orbiting laboratory.

During her time at UNC-Chapel Hill, Cardman earned a Bachelor of Science in biology, honors in poetry, and minors in marine science, chemistry, and creative writing. In 2014, she completed a Master of Science in marine sciences.

She returned to UNC in 2019 to speak about her career as an astronaut, reflecting on the skills she learned in the ECL department that contributed to her career: “Science 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 we fit it into, how it all works.”

Zena Cardman Heads to the International Space Station

The DOECL wishes Zena Cardman, UNC-Chapel Hill alum and creative writing minor, safe travels as she ventures to the International Space Station this fall. Cardman and three other crew members plan to embark on this mission as part of NASA’s SpaceX Crew-9 Mission.

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Zena Cardman will deliver the commencement address to the graduating Class of 2024 this spring. The commencement will be held on May 11 at 7pm, in Kenan Stadium. Cardman hopes to impart a message about finding value in the present moment: “A new class of graduates includes the most incredible talent, hope and energy. I can’t wait to see their impact on the world. The chance to speak to graduates is a huge honor and humbling. It can be tricky to stay present while also looking forward to an imminent future, but I’d encourage graduating seniors to think about what’s right in front of them, here and now. Who will you carry with you into this next stage? What do you value? What do you want to improve for others? The answers to these questions can be found in the present and will carry through a lifetime.”
Gabrielle Calvocoressi has spent most of their life flitting between worlds: the past, the present, and the one inside their head. Raised by their grandparents in Middle Haddam, Connecticut — which today has fewer than 450 residents — they admit there just wasn’t much to do when they were growing up. While this riverfront community overflows with lush forests and farmland typical of New England towns, playing outside wasn’t an option because Calvocoressi has nystagmus, an eye condition that reduces vision and depth perception.

Instead, there was a lot of daydreaming. “I think the story behind why I became a writer is pretty common,” Calvocoressi says. “But there are also things about it that aren’t common at all.”

When they were 13, their mom took her own life. “And all of a sudden this thing I didn’t have language for was constantly around me, and people didn’t want to talk about it,” they say. “Even though I was only 13, I understood that something had happened. That was probably a defining moment in my life.”

Calvocoressi can’t recall who it was that gave them their first journal, but they began filling it with words. It wasn’t until they showed it to one of their summer camp counselors that they had language for what it was they were doing: writing poems. “I was like, ‘Oh, poems. That felt quite important,’” Calvocoressi says with a laugh. “That gave me a name and a structure and a vessel — and that vessel was the only rational thing I had in my life to try to put that experience into.”

Calvocoressi often spends months researching a topic for just one line of a poem. Consider bees. “Millions of people write poems about bees. Now that I have a beehive in my backyard, I recognize that most poets who write about them don’t have beehives,” Calvocoressi says, chuckling. “Bees are weird and amazing and violent. They are their own world. Spending time with them and the beekeeper has made me realize that if I want to write about bees, I need to learn everything I can. Otherwise, they become some boring metaphor everyone has heard before.”

Calvocoressi believes poems aren’t all that different from science. “Years ago, I had these two science students, and when something wouldn’t work in their writing, they wouldn’t take it personally,” they recall. “It’s not that it didn’t bother them, but they would look at each other and say, ‘Why do you think that happened?’ And then they’d talk it through and get excited about why it didn’t work and what they’d do instead.”

That’s when Calvocoressi realized that writing poetry is like a hypothesis. The lines and structure are the experiments. Some work; others don’t. And when they fail, the poet analyzes what went wrong and tries something else. “Poetry is so cool like that,” Calvocoressi says. “I get a lot of physics and pre-med students who aren’t just using it because they need a creative thing on their CV. There’s something about the way their minds work that draws them to the artform.”

Much of Calvocoressi’s work focuses on vessels. The poem itself is a vessel for communication. So is the human body. Because of their nystagmus, Calvocoressi didn’t learn to walk until they were 3 years old. But they did develop a keen sense of hearing — and today their poems overflow with sensory language.

Calvocoressi points to a patch of leaves in the trees. They are lime-green, illuminated by a halo of mid-morning sunlight. “Look at the light,” they say. “It’s so gorgeous right now. And I get to think about that. And I get to think about my students and how they are going to blow my mind in class today. It’s like the beautiful and the terrible. I’m always working on that.”

Gabrielle Calvocoressi is an associate professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature within the UNC College of Arts and Sciences.

Firstly, I was terrible at science.
I got as far as slicing the frog’s abdomen open. Then I made an excuse and walked the halls ‘til the bell rang.
I know what you’re thinking. That’s biology. When I looked inside the cavity I knew I didn’t have what it took. For a life in science. God, I have intestines like that frog. They pulse and shine like his.

From “Some Thoughts on Building the Atom Bomb”
English 105 Students Get ‘School of Rock’ Experience

By Michael Lananna.

First-year Carolina student Jada Yard plays tenor saxophone for the Marching Tar Heels. There’s no doubt she’s musically inclined, yet — until recently — Yard had never attended a rock concert.

That changed Feb. 26, when Yard and her English 105 classmates descended upon the legendary Cat’s Cradle music venue in Carrboro. More than a field trip, the concert was also homework.

After meeting and interviewing members of the indie band Hotel Fiction in their Greenlaw classroom the day before, nearly 50 students from teaching associate professor Marc Cohen’s introductory writing and rhetoric course crammed into the sold-out venue’s back room to see the band perform.

“People always say that it’s so much better than just listening in your headphones,” Yard said, smiling. “I could hear every single note, like every single feeling that they were expressing to the crowd, and all the people around me were so into it. The funniest thing to me is Professor Cohen. He knew all the words, all the songs they were singing, and you could tell he was in his element.”

English 105 introduces students to academic writing across the disciplines of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. The broad nature of the course gives professors creative freedom to design their own units. Cohen has long prioritized crafting immersive, experiential projects for his students, dating back to his days as a high school English teacher.

“I’m a big believer that if we want anything to be great, we’ve got to love it ourselves,” Cohen said. After seeing the band play last year, he thought they would appeal to his students. It helps that the band members aren’t much older than Cohen’s students. Founding members Jess Thompson and Jade Long met at the University of Georgia and graduated in 2021, and they’ve been touring and making music ever since.

The day before the show, Thompson and Long sat among Cohen’s students and played an icebreaking, music-themed game. In the coming weeks, the students will have opportunities to interview even more people from Hotel Fiction’s circle. Their assignment is to write essays about the band’s past, present and future.

“It’s really cool that somebody reached out to have us be a part of the unit for a class,” Thompson said. The fact that Cohen asked that students be able to talk to the band’s families, agent, manager and producer “definitely shows that he understands the holistic nature of being in a band and how many people it takes to make that happen. We’re just really honored.”

As Thompson, Long and the rest of the band posed with Cohen at the end of class for pictures, Long shouted out, “Coolest professor ever!”

Yard called the experience “amazing.”

“Professor Cohen has taken a class that was generally supposed to be open and shut, and he made it something that we will really think about for the rest of our time at Carolina,” Yard said.

A version of this article appeared in University Communications, March 2024.
Medieval and Early Modern Studies and DLC host Medieval Gaming Night

This February, the Digital Literacy Communications Lab (DLC) and the Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) program collaborated to host another successful Medieval Gaming Event in the Greenlaw Gameroom. This learn-and-play event centered on the award-winning, open-world RPG *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt* (2015), and was followed by a discussion led by Professor Taylor Cowdery to contextualize the game.

*The Witcher 3* is played through the itinerant monster-hunter and contract-worker Geralt of Rivia who wanders from medieval town to medieval town, solving monsters for a fee. Over the course of this game, the player must frequently make choices that directly impact the gaming world.

The Critical Gaming team and Prof. Cowdery chose this game because it is among the most recent, well-known games to feature a medieval (or medievalizing) world. Prof. Cowdery was especially interested in inviting students to consider how important AAA games represent the medieval past and how open world RPGs “thematize moral choice.”

Prof. Cowdery added: “I wanted to do a literary game, which also describes *The Witcher 3*—it’s based on a series of books, of course, but many of the side quests in the game read a bit like little gothic short stories.”

In speaking to the relationship between gaming and medievalism, Prof Cowdery said that players often “turn to immersive RPGs for many of the same reasons that they turn to medievalizing fantasy literature, television, and film.”

In sum, medievalism invites players to consider difficult social, political, and moral problems in a context that makes it more comfortable for them to think about.

This event was largely inspired by a very successful collaboration between Prof. Harry Cushman and DLC Director Courtney Rivard in the fall semester of 2023.
Dr. Reva E. Sias Speaks at Inaugural Hess Lecture

The inaugural Hess lecture took place on Monday, November 13 at 5:30. Dr. Reva E. Sias spoke on “The Rhetorical Presence and Activism of the First Nineteenth-Century African American Women Physicians.” Dr. Sias is a professor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies at California State University, Fresno.

Professor Candace Epps-Robertson, who was the first Jonathan M. Hess Term Professor, organized the event. Jonathan M. Hess was a professor at UNC, chair of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures at UNC, and co-chair of the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies. The Hess professorship is given to a pre-tenured assistant professor in the fine arts and humanities who honors Hess’s legacy of outstanding scholarship, excellence in teaching, and a commitment to the development of gender equality, diversity, and inclusiveness.

Prof. Epps-Robertson says of her choice to bring in Dr. Sias: “I am grateful for my previous term with the Hess Professorship because it gave me time and resources for my research and allowed me to bring in Dr. Reva E. Sias. This talk allowed the UNC community to connect with a scholar whose research and mentoring impact many. Dr. Sias’s work in archival studies, Afrafeminist rhetorics, and medical rhetorics represents the kind of research that helps us think in teaching, and a commitment to the development of gender equality, diversity, and inclusiveness.

During the lecture, Dr. Sias discussed her archival work on the first African American women physicians. She reported her research on Rebecca Davis Lee Crumpler, Rebecca J. Cole, and Susan Smith McKinney-Steward, all early African American women physicians. She shared various archival materials she found, including Crumpler’s personal journal and articles written by Cole and McKinney. Dr. Sias’s work on these materials provides insight into how race and gender intersect in the rhetorics of medicine.

2023 Thomas Wolfe Prize and Lecture with Allison Hedge Coke

Allison Hedge Coke, 2023 Thomas Wolfe Prize Recipient, read on October 3, 2023 in Moeser Auditorium in Hill Hall.

Having spent much of her early life working in fields, factories, commercial fishing, construction, and cleaning, Hedge Coke brings a compassionate and unfinishing perspective on the lives of everyday people in her poems, nonfiction, and activist work. “This is a time we must unravel what would otherwise surely choke us,” she says as an invitation to all who read her work and, through it, hope to find a way into their own hard-fought stories.


Her latest book, Look at This Blue, a poem, (2022), is an assemblage, book-length poem, and was selected as a 2022 National Book Award Finalist and 2023 Emory Elliott Book Award winner.

The Blanche Armfield Series Presents Dilruba Ahmed


Ahmed is the recipient of The Florida Review’s Editors’ Award, a Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Memorial Prize, and the Katharine Bakeless Nason Fellowship in Poetry awarded by the Bread Loaf Writers Conference. She holds degrees from the University of Pittsburgh and Warren Wilson College’s MFA Program for Writers.

Gram-O-Rama Performs “Meat Prey Troll”

The 2023 Gram-O-Rama class performed two shows this semester: one on-campus on December 5 and one at Mettlesome Theater on December 9.

Prof. Ross White said, “This year’s performance was a smash success. The students ended up in the largest venue that’s ever hosted Gram-O-Rama, to my knowledge, and they had an exceptional crowd. Then, five nights later, they did it again in a theater in downtown Durham. The spirit of adventurousness is alive and well in Gram-O-Rama!”

Gram-O-Rama was created over forty years ago for students who love stretching the English language to its most hilarious limits. This course is intended for students who love "word play, music, rhythm, sketch comedy, performance, nonsense, and the circusy possibilities of language."

This course was originally designed by ECL faculty member, Prof. Daphne Athas and was revived after Prof. Athas’s retirement by Prof. Marianne Ginger. Breaking away from the rigidity of stylistics, Athas sought to “beguile” and “delight” through her unconventional approach to grammar and composition. Ever since Athas started shaping this course in the ’80’s, it has been a beloved course for students and faculty alike and an immensely entertaining event to see by the wider community.
Congratulations to the Department’s Award-Winning Teachers

PROFESSOR BRAD HAMMER is the recipient of the J. Carlyle Sitterson Award for Teaching 1st-year students. Prof. Hammer “was pleased to win the award because the students drove the nomination process. A lot of the students tell me that my section of ENGL 105i (Health and Medicine) has the reputation of being extremely hard so, when I won, it felt like the students were affirming something meritorious about the value of their hard work.”

Prof. Hammer emphasizes argumentation in his pedagogy: “I put a lot of effort into reviewing the students’ work and then creating assignments that directly address the students’ difficulties with / assumption about argumentation. I’ve spent the last 30+ years thinking endlessly about what it means to teach writing effectively. In this endeavor, I don’t merely want the students to become better writers but rather more complex thinkers as they learn to roadmap arguments free of logical fallacy.”

KARAH MITCHELL received the Tanner Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching by Graduate Teaching Assistants. Upon winning the award, Mitchell “felt extremely grateful to have had the chance to teach and to learn from so many wonderful students at UNC-Chapel Hill. During my time as a graduate student, I’ve grown tremendously not only as a researcher and a writer but also as a teacher. When I started the PhD, I knew I would of course be teaching while working on my degree, but I didn’t realize just how much I would grow as a teacher!”

Mitchell hopes to impact her students not only academically but also as individuals: “I hope for students in my classes to gain a deeper understanding of who they are, how they think, why they think the way they do, and how they can navigate life with the utmost care, compassion, and curiosity (we truly never stop learning). Whether it’s a literature class or a composition class, these are my end goals, and I view the material being taught as so many invitations to think deeply, to reflect sincerely, and to grow intentionally as an individual in the world.”

PROFESSOR FLORENCE DORE is the 2024 nominee for the Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching: “The BOG Teaching nomination is a real honor. I am privileged to teach both songwriting and American literature here at UNC-Chapel Hill, and in both kinds of classes, I aim to bring joy and creativity into the pursuit of knowledge. My principal motivation as a teacher is to model and stir up the pleasures of creative intellectual pursuit, and for me it is precisely this joy that renders what we do in the classroom so much more than filling students with knowledge. It is my abiding hope that my Carolina students take from my classes both the tools and the desire for a lifetime of learning.”

Prof. Rebecka Rutledge Fisher Awarded a Spring 2024 Camargo Prize and Residency

Prof. Rutledge Fisher’s 10-week residency at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France will include work in the French Archives Nationales d’Outre Mer at Aix-en-Provence. Her 2020 Johnson Fellowship at the IAH supported the drafting of the introduction to her book in progress, The Thinker as Poet: The Poetry and Poetics of W.E.B. Du Bois. During her residency at the Camargo, Prof. Rutledge Fisher will research and draft the book’s first chapter. This chapter frames Du Bois’s gold-medal winning sociology exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle as a principal site of black transnational and transdisciplinary exchange. The transdisciplinarity of this exhibit serves as a heuristic for analyzing Du Bois’s well-nigh singular cultivation across his oeuvre of what Dr. Rutledge Fisher calls a deep “poetic sublime,” which effectively disturbs and disorders the orders of modern epistemology. She expects that her research for chapter one will show how Du Bois radicalized 18th and 19th century Franco-German notions of the sublime, cultivating an expansive poetic aesthetic that allowed him to develop an intersectional and transdisciplinary approach via his scholarly interventions.

Prof. Steven Gotzler Receives Global Partnership Award

Prof. Steven Gotzler has received a Global Partnership Award Expansion Grant from UNC Global. His award grows out of existing partnerships with faculty at King’s College London (KCL) who have been collaborating with this year’s Carolina Seminar in Critical Game Studies, and who visited Chapel Hill last Spring.

This grant will support Prof. Gotzler and two other UNC faculty members, Prof. Courtney Rivard in ECL and Prof. Joyce Rudinsky in Communications, as they travel to London next June to participate in a UNC-KCL symposium on "Game Studies and Ludic Teaching," where they will share research works in progress and exchange effective strategies for games-based pedagogy.

Global Partnership Awards are distributed to faculty and students to “create and sustain meaningful relationships with international partner institutions.”

Prof. Michael McFee Wins 2023 Roanoke-Chowan Award

Prof. Michael McFee, Doris Betts Term Professor in the Creative Writing Program, won the 2023 Roanoke-Chowan Award from the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, for his collection of poems A Long Time to Be Gone (Carnegie Mellon University Press). This annual prize—given for the best book of North Carolina poetry published during the previous year—was presented in Raleigh on December 8th.

UNC poetry faculty have won the Roanoke-Chowan Award seven times in the past: Jim Seay (1997), the late Peggy Rabb (2000), Alan Shapiro (2002 and 2005), and Michael Chitwood (2003 and 2008). McFee shared the prize with Fred Chappell in 2001. Creative Writing benefactor Frank Borden Hanes won the first Award in 1953, for Abel Anders: A Narrative.
Ariannah Kubli Publishes Essay in *The Chronicle*

Ariannah Kubli, a fourth-year PhD student in the ECL department, recently published an essay in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: “Making Space for the Humanities Off Campus: Night School Bar and the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research offer alternatives to traditional academe.”

Colin Dekersgieter Awarded 2023 Stan and Tom Wick Poetry Prize

PhD candidate Colin Dekersgieter was awarded the 2023 Stan and Tom Wick Poetry Prize for his collection *Opium and Ambergris*. The annual award includes $2,500 and publication with Kent State University Press. Dekersgieter was selected by poet and author Marilyn Chin.

Stephanie Kinzinger Wins James W. Gargano Award

On behalf of the Poe Studies Association, PhD candidate Stephanie Kinzinger’s article, “Embodied Cognition in Edgar Allan Poe: Eureka’s Cosmology, Dupin’s Intuition,” was selected to receive the James W. Gargano Award. This award was created to honor of James Gargano, the author of landmark articles on Poe’s fiction and a founding member of the PSA. Kinzinger’s article was previously featured in the December 2022 issue of *Nineteenth-Century Literature*.

Lexi Toufas Wins Hanes Graduate Fellowship

Congratulations to PhD candidate Lexi Toufas, who was awarded the Hanes Graduate Fellowship from the Wilson Library for research in the Rare Books Collection this summer.

Joshua Cody Ward Presents at SWPACA 2024

PhD student Joshua Cody Ward presented a paper entitled “‘I'll Be Your Mirror’: The Gaze and Self-Construction in Lou Reed’s Street Hassle and The Bells” at the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Maggie Miller to Present at the Alpha Behn Society Conference in Canterbury

PhD student Maggie Miller’s essay, “About suffering Behn was never wrong: The Seven Sorrows of Mary and Aphra Behn’s Analogical Imagination” was accepted at the 8th International Aphra Behn Society Conference that will take place this July in Canterbury, England.

Ryan Carroll Wins Sally Mitchell Prize

PhD student Ryan Carroll won the North American Victorian Studies Association’s 2023 Sally Mitchell Prize, which recognizes “the best paper presented by a graduate student at the annual NAVSA conference.” His paper was entitled “Revision and the Politics of Truth: Telling in The Autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano.” Carroll was also invited to contribute his essay to a forthcoming issue of Victorian Studies.

Doug Stark wins King’s College London Collaboration Grant

PhD candidate Doug Stark received a King’s College London Collaboration Grant from the Institute for the Arts & Humanities to fund a “UNC-KCL Critical Game Studies Symposium.” In June 2024, three graduate students from ECL will travel to London to present on game research and pedagogy. This grant complements the Global Partnership Expansion Grant awarded to Prof. Steven Gotzler, which will support the three UNC faculty members attending the symposium.

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**GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESSES**

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PhD student Maggie Miller’s essay, “About suffering Behn was never wrong: The Seven Sorrows of Mary and Aphra Behn’s Analogical Imagination” was accepted at the 8th International Aphra Behn Society Conference that will take place this July in Canterbury, England.

**Ariannah Kubli Publishes Essay in *The Chronicle***

Ariannah Kubli, a fourth-year PhD student in the ECL department, recently published an essay in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: “Making Space for the Humanities Off Campus: Night School Bar and the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research offer alternatives to traditional academe.”
Skjellum-Salmon has been a fan of the House of Coxx for a long time, but in June of 2020, they were inspired to collaborate with the collective on a project that underscored their impact in Durham and the broader Triangle area: “In 2020, the House of Coxx co-hosted a vigil to commemorate our Black LGBTQ siblings who have been lost to state-sanctioned and interpersonal violence. During this performance, which took place on the steps of the Durham County Courthouse, artists sang, performed in drag, and spoke about the importance of protecting Black LGBTQ lives, specifically Black transgender lives. It was during that vigil that I felt like the artists there, especially those from the House of Coxx, were transforming the space of the courthouse from one of anti-Black, anti-LGBTQ violence into a space that was meant to celebrate Black LGBTQ people.”

This project will produce a short documentary that “explores the history of the House of Coxx’s formation, traces their rise to prominence in the area, and touches on their art and activism in the context of more recent anti-Black, anti-LGBTQ legislation in the state of North Carolina.” In addition, Skjellum-Salmon hopes this project will “be a space in which the artists of the House of Coxx can explore how their drag relates to their gender, racial, and sexual identities—as well as why they do the art they do.”

When asked what Skjellum-Salmon wants viewers to take away from this project, they said: “The House of Coxx is a name known throughout the Southeast; they’re very important to Durham. I want people who may or may not know them to understand the depth of their impact in being the premier, majority-Black drag artist collective in North Carolina, if not the Southeast. I also want those who interact with this project to be able to see how the House of Coxx is part of broader, though marginalized, Black LGBTQ histories in the United States.”
DOECL Grads Organize for Improved Mental Health Support

Several graduate students in the Department of English and Comparative Literature — as well as the DOECL’s graduate student organization, CoLEAGS — have been organizing to research and address mental health struggles within the department’s graduate student community. Two of these students are PhD candidates Rachel Warner and Jillian Kern.

Kern says: “There’s limited formal data on this, but we know there’s been a really high prevalence of mental illness and risk among PhD students even before COVID. PhD students are likely at increased risk for suicidal ideation and death by suicide compared to undergraduates. We also are seeing a lot of data that suggests for workers and students nationwide, there’s a worsening mental health crisis as we accommodate the pandemic in our working lives and institutions and attempt to return to in-person work structures.”

She adds, “We have held two forums recently—one exploring alt-ac Career advising needs to be expanded to eliminate the feeling of helplessness and lack of options. “The most recent forum was mental health, self-care, and suicide prevention and was led by Dr. David Obergfell. The thesis of the project was building connection within our community. Dr. Obergfell’s argument was that the biggest risk factors are rejection and a sense of non-belonging. Most often these feelings are perceived, but the best way to assuage that and address it is to promote a culture of connectedness, care, and checking in with one another. It is important to make people feel seen and heard.

Regarding long-term goals, Warner says, “I’d like to see more collaboration with faculty. There has to be faculty input and proactive initiative to create a community of care, and we need a healthier work culture. In more concrete terms, we want to see things like mental-health panels in the onboarding of new students. There are unique stressors to the graduate humanities. We need to be more caring and stand to be a little more kind and in less of a rush to judge.

“I’d also like to see more infrastructure scaffolded into training and regular conversations. There is a false idea that talking about suicide and mental health will increase the risk. But many studies have proven that this is not true. The more you talk about it, the less likely someone is to harm themselves.”

—Rachel Warner

“There are unique stressors to the graduate humanities. We need to be more caring and stand to be a little more kind and in less of a rush to judge.”

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—Rachel Warner
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESSES

Audrey Zhou Debuts in Strange Horizons

Audrey Zhou, a creative writing minor, has published her first short story, “Threshold,” in Strange Horizons.

During her freshman year, Zhou took Intro to Fiction Writing with Dr. Karen Tucker: “It remains one of my favorite classes at UNC and was also where I first got exposed to these kinds of opportunities. She spent our last class sharing some resources for publishing in literary magazines, and while I didn’t start submitting pieces to magazines until this past semester, those resources have remained invaluable. Recently, I’ve also started looking at what magazines my favorite authors have been published in to find other places I might like to submit to someday.”

“I’ve always loved fantasy and sci-fi so I gravitated very naturally to Strange Horizons, which publishes speculative fiction. It’s been my favorite magazine for a while and I’m so happy that my story ‘Threshold’ has found a home in it! This is my first sale, so on an even more sentimental note I’m really glad that it went to a magazine I love so much.”

Zhou is grateful for the writing opportunities she has had in all of her ECL classes: “I’ve taken almost exclusively creative writing classes in the ECL department, and in all of those classes I’ve loved just getting the opportunity to write fiction. Those short stories — and novel chapters, in the case of Professor Velez’s wonderful YA fiction class — have been my favorite things I’ve done in college. Writing teaches you so much about yourself — your obsessions, the things you can’t let go — and I think it makes you really aware of what it means to be a human being.”

Malika Amoruso Publishes in Jasna Persuasions

Malika Amoruso’s research interests have varied widely and deeply. Under the guidance of Dr. Inger Brodey, her research on Jane Austen & Adaptation Theory has culminated in publishing “‘Not Every Single Man is Looking for a Wife’: Austen, Fordyce, and Fire Island” in Jasna Persuasions. She also participated in an independent study on Shakespeare & Trans Studies with Dr. David Baker and explored the intersection of Emily Dickinson & Ecosystems with Dr. Eliza Richards.

Her research does not end in the ECL. She has actively contributed to HIV pathogenesis research in the Swanstrom Lab and engaged in a SARS-Cov2 antiviral mutagenesis study.

As one can see from her extensive history in research, Amoruso is fascinated by interdisciplinary research. Amoruso loves reading deeply and composing, “yet with a more scientific and quantitative background.” In speaking to how her time in the ECL has impacted the growth of her research skills, Amoruso credits her mentors and professors with showing her “how everyone can come from different backgrounds but still bring value to the field. They’re truly inspiring!”

Amoruso’s inspiration for majoring in English stems from her sincere “love of reading and writing! That might sound a bit cheesy, but even after deciding to focus on science for university, my free time was devoted mainly to devouring various pieces of literature.” When she realized that she had the time to double major, Amoruso “jumped at the opportunity.”

Amoruso’s favorite courses were difficult for her to narrow down, but in the end she said, “it’s a three-way tie between CMPL 220 (Global Jane Austen) by Dr. Inger Brodey, ENGL 390 (M/M Romance) by Dr. Tyler Curtain, and ENGL 437 Chief British Romantics by Dr. Jeanne Moskal… I can honestly say that every DOECL course I’ve taken at UNC has been both highly engaging and memorable.”

After graduation, Amoruso plans on working “for a few years in one of the areas I’ve gained experience in while in college (technical communication, project management, marketing/ communications specialist) before considering applying for a graduate program!”

“Even after deciding to focus on science for university, my free time was devoted mainly to devouring various pieces of literature.”
In the fall of 2023, Eno Arts Mill, run by the Orange County Arts Commission, released a call for submissions for the Coalesce 2024 exhibition. Coalesce showcases the work of twenty Orange-County based artists, including ten poets and ten visual artists. The twenty artists were matched in pairs in which “each poet creat[ed] a poem based on a visual work by their partner, and each visual artist creat[ed] a work based on a poem.” Among the featured artists in this exhibition is Ash Chen, an ECL major and Medicine, Literature, and Culture minor.

For her contribution to the exhibition, Chen was partnered with local artist and photographer, Laura Williams. In speaking to her inspirations for her work and this submission, Chen described her “central obsessions” (recurring images, themes, and words that each poet engages with repeatedly) as being darker, sprawling concepts, focusing on real-world, contemporary issues and social advocacy. She finds that her writing often concentrates on “embodiment, in the scars and somatic senses working within and around the body and what that tells me about myself and others...Like just about every poet, I also work with my personal mythology and familial themes, especially in the context of my Chinese-American heritage, my socioeconomic standings and roots in Charlotte, NC, and, of course, my loved ones.”

In speaking to how her coursework has influenced her journey as a poet, Chen said, “My Intro to Poetry Writing class started it all.” Chen took Prof. Ross White’s Introduction to Poetry course in Spring 2023 and “not only built a foundation for my poetics, but discovered the specifics of my style and voice as well as my love for certain forms, like the ghazal and the villanelle.” Chen also credits Professor Eliza Richards’s course on Contemporary Poetry and Professor Gabrielle Calvocresci’s Intermediate course as strong influences on reaching deeper into her voice and “engag[ing] with poetry on multiple levels, through the personal and craft.”

After graduation, Chen plans to take a gap year and apply for a travel scholarship or writing fellowship “to take a gap year and explore the world a bit!” In that gap year, she hopes to “enrich my own understanding of arts and culture outside my sphere of familiarity and comfort, make new connections, as well as study for the LSAT. I hope to then go to law school to study and practice health and disability law somewhere in the Northeast.”

Recently, one of Chen’s poems was also nominated for a Pushcart prize. Chen said, “It’s an example of one that I think is not technically one of my strongest, but the amount of people who comment on its resonance is a point of pride.”
Georgia Chapman Revitalizes SOUL

Georgia Chapman, an ECL and anthropology double major and creative writing minor, has been the president of the Student Organization for Undergraduate Literature (SOUL) since fall of 2022. Chapman’s journey to the world of book clubs was unconventional, to say the least. Prior to SOUL, Chapman had never been part of a book club. However, in 2021, she found her way to SOUL through a flyer on the back door of a Greenlaw bathroom. Chapman then persuaded her roommate to go to a meeting in the quad “under one of those ugly white tents”: “There were about eight of us, including the two officers, and it was cold, dark, and pizza-less. Nonetheless, it was the first time I had ever been able to discuss the things I had read with others outside of an academic setting or online forums.” Chapman noticed during the spring semester of that school year that the SOUL flyers had stopped popping up and that meetings were not being held. Over the summer, she asked Dr. Lithgow what happened and fell into holding elections. Chapman ran for president and has been acting ever since!

Chapman made it her mission to revivify the club, but this mission did not come without many challenges; this started with the fact that all the officers were new to SOUL. However, the new team quickly realized the need for an organization like SOUL in the UNC community: “Our first interest meeting back as an active organization drew over forty people. We have maintained a very consistent membership since then and it’s been so nice to see friendships begin within the organization and extend outside of it.” Chapman identified the club’s main goal to be drawing “people [to] reading by providing a low stress environment to discuss literature in a broad sense.” SOUL has subsequently become “a gathering place for students who might have even the smallest interest in literature and bringing them to a space where they can explore that and meet like-minded people.”

After graduating, Chapman intends to pursue graduate school either for publishing or English to prepare her for a career in the publishing industry.

What is S.O.U.L. all about?
S.O.U.L. is a non-traditional book club here on campus. Instead of reading the same book every month, we have a theme for each meeting. In the past, we have had themes like movie adaptation night, childhood favorites, bests and worsts. This way, people are encouraged to come talk about books with other readers without feeling the pressure of having to read by a deadline. S.O.U.L. operates as an organization to further research, scholarship, and creativity at UNC. We provide all undergraduate majors a place to come and discuss all things bookish!

How do you help students?
Our officers understand how hard it is to find time for reading in between classes and other activities here on campus. We help students who don’t have time to be able to discuss their favorites, inspiring them to pick up a book when they have the time. Our goal is to create a community where people feel comfortable and excited to read their next book!

What do you like most about being a member of S.O.U.L.?
Most members enjoy the discussions, as they are the heart of our organization. Each week, new and different faces come in to join our community which has been incredible to see throughout the semesters. We also enjoy the ability to find people with similar interests and book taste without the added stress of a reading deadline. But the icing on top is meeting up with friends over pizza and drinks!

What has been your favorite event?
Although we had some great events last semester like our character costume contest, our recent blind date with a book has been a favorite for all of our officers and most members! We invited undergraduates to bring a book to receive a book. Once they brought one, they received a book ticket and our officers wrapped them and put a blurb on each book. We then invited them to pick out a new one to take home with them. We had a great turnout with even better discussion on romance novels! And, of course, our usual pizza, snacks, and drinks.
Ana Hoppert Flores, a recent ECL graduate focusing on media production, was the president of the Carolina Film Association and an editor for Aspect during her senior year.

The Carolina Film Association is an organization dedicated to “offering resources, guidance, and organization to student filmmakers to realize their vision in a cinematic language over televisual or episodic forms.”

Hoppert Flores became involved in CFA in the fall of her sophomore year:

“I transferred into UNC my sophomore year knowing that I wanted to pursue some sort of storytelling, but I wasn’t aware of all the mediums with which this is possible. I reached out to the organization, became a producer on a student film, and fell in love with the production process.”

Hoppert Flores became an Aspect (a student-led journal for criticism of film, television, video games and other screen-based media) editor in her junior year. She was invited to join after hearing about it from friends in the film concentration. One semester and two film classes later, and Hoppert Flores knew she “had fallen in love with exploring what has been and can be achieved through film.”

Her favorite things about working with this journal included “getting exposed to and learning more about different films and the way in which they engage in and with different practices and theories when reading submissions.”

In speaking to how her courses with the DOECL have prepared her to take on these positions, Hoppert Flores said:

“When it comes to my position as an editor on Aspect, taking film theory and analysis classes primed me to understand the language most frequently used to describe films in essays, while researching about form, style, and content and tracing these concepts prepared me to engage with submissions in a more fluid, critical way. Having the opportunity to work collaboratively in English classes, whether that be through workshops or group projects, also prepared me for my role as president of the Carolina Film Association.”

ECL Students Inducted into Phi Beta Kappa

The ECL would like to congratulate sixteen of our students for their acceptance into UNC’s Phi Beta Kappa chapter, Alpha of North Carolina.

Phi Beta Kappa is an academic honor society for the arts and sciences. Students must complete 75 hours of coursework in the liberal arts and sciences with a GPA of 3.85 or higher or 105 hours with a GPA of 3.75 or higher to be eligible for membership. Phi Beta Kappa is prestigious, as less than 1% of college students qualify for membership.

This year’s ECL inductees include Hannah Garner, Rachel Caroline Hodakowski, Anna Marie Butler, Ruth Elizabeth Jeffers, Mary Slade McKee, Bennett Lathan Hubbard, Emily Anne Baker, Olivia Grace Cassidy, Riley Erin Wojcik, Kelly Ann Ray, Malika Amoruso, Alexandra Florence Peeler, Jada Cimone Young, Carsen Olivia Masterton, Paige Mary Cameron, and Nicholas Tutwiler.

Congratulations to these students for their accomplishment!”
NEW FACULTY

Daelena Tinnin-Gadson

The DOECL welcomes Professor Daelena Tinnin-Gadson. Prof. Tinnin-Gadson joins the ECL faculty as an Assistant Professor of Black Film Studies and African American Literature. She holds a PhD from the University of Texas at Austin in Film Studies and African American Studies. She also holds an M.A. in Communication Studies with an emphasis in Communication and Culture from the University of Denver.

Currently, Prof. Tinnin-Gadson is working on a project called “Down to the Pynk: Haunting, Excess Flesh, and the Construction of Black Female Spectacle in Katori Hall’s P-Valley.” The project “looks at the show P-Valley as [an] illustrative example of Black feminist creative methodology and a generative media text that stages a visual and sonic intervention in how we imagine Blackness, subjectivity, and Black female iconography.”

She recently published “Can You See Her? The Present Absence of Black Female Subjectivity in Get Out” in Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies. This article was also provisionally selected for the Best Researcher Award at the International Research Awards on Communication and Media Studies.

In addition to her research, Prof. Tinnin-Gadson is looking forward to working with students at UNC. Expressing her excitement about teaching, she says she’s “most excited to work with undergraduate students and graduate students who are passionate or even curious about film studies, Black feminism, and all things popular culture.” She remembers her own experiences as a student and looks forward to teaching “classes that give that ‘lightbulb’ moment. I needed that as a student and I’m excited to be a part of that journey for UNC students.”

Sarah Leilani Parijs

By Allison Blackburn, Graduate Writer

The DOECL is excited to welcome Dr. Sarah Leilani Parijs as a Postdoctoral Research Associate through the Carolina Postdoctoral Program for Faculty Diversity. Dr. Parijs holds a PhD in English with a minor in Literature and Science from Indiana University Bloomington as well as an MA in English from the University of Texas at Austin in Literature. She holds a PhD from the University of Texas at Arlington. She studies American literature, specifically nineteenth-century nature writing and contemporary science fiction. Read on to learn more about Dr. Parijs:

What are you most excited about at UNC?
I am most excited about working with interdisciplinary scholars and teachers in fields including ecofeminism, postcolonialism, health sciences and science studies, American literature, and science fiction studies. For example, I am looking forward to getting involved with the HHIVE Lab and exploring the Special Collections at the Wilson Library. I am also excited to teach an undergraduate course in Spring 2024 within the ECL Department, which focuses on literary responses to the Space Race in postcolonial science fiction’s imagination of futurity.

What is a project you’re currently working on?
I am currently working on a book manuscript project tentatively titled Allegories of Decay in Gaia: Writing an Interconnected Worlds of Parts in American Nature Writing and Science Fiction. In response to mounting ecological crises, Allegories of Decay in Gaia reveals the conceptual and historical ties between race, coloniality, and nature in the figure of Gaia, or the Earth as a living, ecological system through allegoresis, or allegorical interpretation.

Melissa Faliveno

The DOECL welcomes Melissa Faliveno as Assistant Professor of Creative Writing. Prof. Faliveno holds an MFA in Creative Nonfiction Writing from Sarah Lawrence College. She has published the essay collection TOMBOYLAND, which was named a Best Book of 2020 by NPR, New York Public Library, Oprah Magazine, and Electric Literature, and recipient of a 2021 Award for Outstanding Literary Achievement from the Wisconsin Library Association. Keep reading to learn more about Professor Faliveno:

What are you most excited about at UNC?
“The creative writing program here is legendary, and I’m so excited to be part of it again—to work with such talented and passionate students and to get to see them grow as writers, from Intro all the way to Senior Thesis and beyond.

Next year I’ll also be taking on the hallowed role of faculty advisor for Cellar Door, which is a huge honor, and a super exciting one. The UNC campus is also just stunningly beautiful, and I love spending time outside, so I’m looking forward to doing a lot of wandering around the arboretum, meeting students and friends outside, taking walks in the woods, and watching the magnolias bloom.”

What is a project you’re currently working on?
“I’m currently working on a novel. I actually finished the first draft of it here in Chapel Hill a couple years ago, when I was the Kenan Visiting Writer, and I’m excited to finish it here (hopefully very soon!) too. The story takes place mostly in the woods, and I live in the woods right now, so it all feels pretty fated and right. And, of course, I have another essay collection in the works after that. I love writing and reading fiction, but creative nonfiction is my first love, so I’m ready to get back at it.”
Sarah Ficke

By Anna Blackburn, Graduate Writer

The DOECL welcomes Professor Sarah Ficke as Teaching Assistant Professor. Prof. Ficke holds a PhD and an MA in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She studies 19th-century British literature and culture (especially law) and critical animal studies.

What are you most excited about at UNC?

As someone who completed my Ph.D. at UNC, I am most excited about simply returning to the composition classroom with some new (especially digital) approaches and a fresh perspective. (I have recently been teaching middle schoolers—an invaluable pedagogical experience!)

What is a project you’re currently working on?

My interests include animal studies and prison education, so I’m currently reading Lori Gruen and Justin Marceau’s Carceral Logics: Human Incarceration and Animal Captivity (2022). I would love to integrate this material into a future ENGL 105s: Writing in Law class.

Nicole Berland

The DOECL welcomes Nicole Berland as a Teaching Assistant Professor. A scholar and educator living in Carrboro, North Carolina, Berland has a Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature from the University of North Carolina, an M.A. in Humanities from the University of Chicago, and a B.A. in English, Psychology, and Plan II Liberal Arts Honors from the University of Texas. She has taught courses in film, literature, media studies, rhetoric and composition, and liberal studies at Roosevelt University and UNC. Berland has also organized community-based social justice reading groups in Austin, Chicago, and the Research Triangle. Her writing on science fiction, fantasy, television, and social justice has appeared in Strange Horizons, PopMatters, The Carolina Quarterly, INDY Week, The Anarres Project, and other publications. In her free time, Berland works as an analog and digital collage artist.

Graham Culbertson

Professor Culbertson received their B.A. in English and Film Studies at the University of South Carolina and their M.A. and Ph.D. in English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Professor Culbertson’s current research focuses on “anarchism, less as a political philosophy and more as a spirit of freedom, creativity, and cooperation.” In addition, they are also working on a book, Batman vs. Anarchism, about the way that Batman stories deploy anarchism as a potential route for Bruce Wayne that ultimately must never be taken.

Prof. Culbertson’s podcast, Everyday Anarchism, brings authors, activists, and academics from all over the world together to discuss this broad sense of anarchism, covering everything from the anarchic roots of Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings to contract grading in the composition classroom to sourdough bread.

When asked what drew Prof. Culbertson back to UNC, they note: “I’ve long loved the approach to composition, especially digital composition, that I learned working with Dan Anderson.”

Kelli Holt

Prof. Holt holds a PhD from UNC-Chapel Hill. She studies 19th-century British literature and culture (especially law) and critical animal studies.

What are you most excited about at UNC?

As someone who completed my Ph.D. at UNC, I am most excited about simply returning to the composition classroom with some new (especially digital) approaches and a fresh perspective. (I have recently been teaching middle schoolers—an invaluable pedagogical experience!)

What is a project you’re currently working on?

My interests include animal studies and prison education, so I’m currently reading Lori Gruen and Justin Marceau’s Carceral Logics: Human Incarceration and Animal Captivity (2022). I would love to integrate this material into a future ENGL 105s: Writing in Law class.

“I am most excited about simply returning to the composition classroom with some new approaches ... and a fresh perspective.”
NEW BOOKS FROM THE DEPARTMENT

Maddie Norris is the Kenan Visiting Writer for 2023-2024

Prof. Maddie Norris joins the DOECL as the Kenan Visiting Writer for 2023-2024. She earned her MFA at the University of Arizona. Prior to that she was the Thomas Wolfe Scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her essays have won the Literary Award in Creative Nonfiction from Ninth Letter and been named Notable in Best American Essays 2020 and 2022.

Her debut essay collection, The Wet Wound: An Elegy in Essays (UGA Press, 2024) uses a medical lens to examine the grief that took over her after her father died of cancer when she was seventeen. These linked essays examine grief from different angles, resulting in a multi-layered exploration on why, contrary to popular belief, keeping wounds open is the best way to care for them physically and emotionally.

Photo by Devlin Donovan LaShell Whiteon

Prof. Tyree Daye publishes a little bump in the earth

Tyree Daye’s a little bump in the earth is an act of invention and remembrance. Through sprawling poems, the town of Youngsville, North Carolina, where Daye’s family has lived for the last 200 years, is reclaimed as the “Ritual House.” Here, “every cousin aunt uncle ghost” is welcome. Daye invokes real and imagined people, the ancestral dead, land, snakes, and chickens, to create a black town on a hill.

Including dreams, letters, revised rental agreements, and “a little museum in the herein-&-after,” where collaged images appear beside documents from Prof. Daye’s ancestors—census records, marriage licenses, and WWII Draft Registration cards—the collection asks if the past can be a portal to the future, the present a catalyst for the past. a little bump in the earth explores what it means to love someone, someplace, even as it changes, dies right in front of your eyes. Poem by poem, Daye is honoring the people of Youngsville and “bringing back the dead.”

Prof. Tyree Daye is a poet from Youngsville, North Carolina. He is the author of two poetry collections, including River Hymns, the 2017 APR/Honickman First Book Prize winner. Daye is a 2017 Ruth Lilly Finalist and Cave Canem fellow. Daye’s work has been published in Prairie Schooner, The New York Times, and Nashville Review.

Daye won the 2019 Palm Beach Poetry Festival Langston Hughes Fellowship, 2019 Diana and Simon ReaebWriter-In-Residence at UC Santa Barbara and is a 2019 Kate Tufts Finalist. Daye most recently was awarded a 2019 Whiting Award and a 2019 Ragin Rubin Award winner.
New work a “eulogy, a cautionary tale, a love letter and a sob of anger”

Prof. Daniel Wallace publishes This Isn’t Going to End Well

In This Isn’t Going to End Well: The True Story of a Man I Thought I Knew, Daniel Wallace explores his relationship with his brother-in-law, and the effects that his suicide had on his family. Published in April, the New York Times calls it “eulogy, a cautionary tale, a love letter and a sob of anger.”

Prof. Wallace talks about the influence of William Nealy, his older sister’s husband, on his life, in stunning prose that addresses the beauty and pain of knowing and losing someone.

He writes, “It was lucky for me to have met him when I did. He was the one who would give me the idea for the life I ended up living, even if what I ended up doing was nothing like him or what he did. He showed me how it was done: experience, imagine, then create. Every book I’ve written is dedicated to him in invisible ink. I doubt I would have written a one of them without him, or that I would ever have considered being an artist at all” (8-9).

In his author’s note, Prof. Wallace notes that he was not trying to solve his brother-in-law’s suicide or find comfort, but “to try and understand him and tell his story the best I could.”

Continue reading to learn more about Prof. Wallace’s writing process:

How would you describe your approach to writing?

I’m not a planner; that means I don’t know what I’m going to write before I write it. It’s improvisational, and surprising, the same way it should be for a reader coming to my work for the first time. So I try to come to it with an open mind, a blank slate, and let the information I get from the first sentence lead me to the second, and so on for hundreds of pages. The second approach, and one that’s equally if not more important, is to put in the hours necessary for the production of a story or a book. It’s work. It’s showing up. And of course there’s revision, which is never-ending.

What is your favorite part of being a writer?

My favorite part of being a writer is that, when I’m lucky, I fall into a spell, immerse myself into my work so deeply I have no idea how much time has passed as the story unfolds. I’m not in this world, I’m in the one I’m creating as I go. Even with a book of non-fiction, which distinguishes itself from fiction solely by being true, or factual, it’s still a story. It still has to be engaging. The other favorite part is that, when I’m successful, I move a reader the same way I was moved. It’s something we share.

What did you learn when writing the book?

I learn something from every book, but this one more than any of the others. This is especially interesting in that it’s non-fiction. I thought I knew everyone in the book; I thought I knew myself. But I don’t think it’s possible to understand life, to understand yourself, without the clarifying tool we all have at our disposal: words. Our minds are a swampy morass of experience and complicated feelings: how are you supposed to make sense of all of it if that’s the only place where our experience and ideas reside?

“Our minds are a swampy morass of experience and complicated feelings: how are you supposed to make sense of all of it if that’s the only place where our experience and ideas reside?”
Gabriel Bump’s Second Novel Blooms into ‘very human’ Story

Story by Margaret Hungate; photo by Jaime Sanchez

“Sad, happy, funny, sad,” Gabriel Bump said when asked to describe his new novel, The New Naturals.

Bump began the press tour for his second published book on Tuesday at Epilogue Books Chocolate Brews on Franklin Street.

While the central premise of the book follows a pair of professors who experience a terrible tragedy and build an underground utopia in the rural mountains of western Massachusetts, its complex themes go beyond that.

“It’s less about the functions of what a different society would be, like the day-to-day of it, and it’s more about what drives people to go seek out something like that, to go seek refuge from the world,” Bump said. “Like, what kind of despair are they feeling in their personal life that makes them want to remove themselves from the world?”

The story is rooted in a personal experience that Bump had after his graduating with his Master of Fine Arts in Fiction from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

“I was just feeling kind of lost in western Massachusetts, just really unhappy,” Bump said. “And so I decided to try and work through that unhappiness.”

The New Naturals centers around six main characters and features each of their perspectives throughout the book.

Bump said his writing process for this novel started by working with one of the characters. He continued that pattern as he crafted new characters in an effort to figure out what happiness looked like for each.

“It ended up being this big puzzle where everyone is feeling unhappy for different reasons and we’re trying to put them together and find what makes them happy,” Bump said. He hopes readers leave the book with the understanding of the importance of leaning into loved ones and people who bring happiness.

Along with being the author of The New Naturals and Everywhere You Don’t Belong, which came out in 2020, Bump is a professor in the UNC Department of English and Comparative Literature and said he considers himself part of a creative writing family in the department.

His editor and co-conversationalist at the reading, Kathy Pories, introduced Bump to the Chapel Hill community. After receiving her Ph.D. from UNC, she spent most of her adult life in Chapel Hill and Durham.

“I haven’t done an event with her like this before, so even that’s just really special,” Bump said.

This story was originally published in The Daily Tar Heel.
ECL Professor and Director of Creative Writing Ross White released a new book of poetry, Charm Offensive (Eyewear Publishing). White’s first full-length poetry collection explores the space between Dickinson’s directive to tell the truth slant and the universal reality of seeing the truth slant without knowing it. Exploring the ways that tenderness can resolve into dissonance and uncertainty can resolve into transcendence, Charm Offensive crackles with the dangers of being alive and the joys of remaining defiant.

Winner of the Sexton Prize for Poetry, Charm Offensive joins Prof. White’s three previous books, 2022’s Valley of Want, 2017’s The Polite Society and 2014’s How We Came Upon the Colony, all published by Unicorn.

Prof. White is also the director of Bull City Press, an independent publisher of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. He hosts The Chapbook, a podcast devoted to chapbooks, and teaches creative writing, podcasting, publishing, and grammar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Prof. White’s poems have appeared or are forthcoming in American Poetry Review, New England Review, Ploughshares, Poetry Daily, Tin House, and The Southern Review, among others. With Matthew Olzmann, he edited Another & Another: An Anthology from the Grind Daily Writing Series. He also has a boutique design firm, Spock & Associates, and a weekly trivia show and podcast, Trivia Escape Pod.
Prof. Hilary Lithgow has been involved with book groups for veterans since 2015. In 2015, the National Endowment for the Humanities wanted to expand their medical reading group to veterans. Prof. Lithgow started a book group for veterans with John Howell, a 2014 honors graduate of ECL and veteran National Guard medic. The group reads mostly short pieces—poetry, short stories, excerpts from longer books—in order to read and discuss each piece deeply.

Prof. Lithgow became involved with Carolina’s Transforming Health and Resilience in Veterans Program (THRIVE) last spring. THRIVE holds a three-week intensive outpatient program for veterans and first responders, which includes a reading group as part of its treatment. Working on these sessions for veterans has impacted Prof. Lithgow tremendously: “I have always been interested in finding ways that literature can be useful outside the classroom. English classrooms started out as exegesis—people trying to discover insights from a sacred text—and these reading groups feel very much like that. I see this process happening often in the classroom, and these reading groups are one way to bring this literary discovery outside of the university.”

Prof. María DeGuzmán’s photo-text prose poem “From the Eye of Hart Crane,” steeped in ecological concerns, was accepted for publication in Fissured Tongue, an imprint of the journal Inverted Syntax. The piece functions as an informal ode to the work of US “Modernist Romantic” poet Hart Crane, particularly to the collection White Buildings that contains “Voyages.”

“Extra Sensories & Other Images,” a five photo-haiku produced with Dr. Carisa Showden (Senior Lecturer, Sociology, University of Auckland, NZ), was selected to appear in Rejoinder, published by Rutgers University’s Institute for Research on Women in partnership with the Feminist Art Project, a program of the Rutgers Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities.

One of Dr. DeGuzmán’s stand-alone photographs, “Juggler’s Cat’s-Paw Ode to Remedios Varo,” was accepted by The Ear, a journal in Irvine, CA. She’s also been invited by Raleigh’s Diamante Arts and Cultural Center to moderate their Latina/o/x Pride Month Exhibition 2023 Artist Discussion Panel as part of a public humanities effort.

Prof. Inger Brodey was interviewed for one of the inaugural podcasts run by the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA). As the 2023-2024 JASNA Traveling Lecturer, Prof. Brodey is embarking on a series of six talks around the country over the next few months.

Prof. Daelena Tinnin-Gadson has joined the board of The Beautiful Project, a community-based arts organization in Durham, North Carolina, that uses storytelling and visual arts to advance the healing and representational justice of Black girls, gender-expansive youth, and women. In this role, Prof. Tinnin-Gadson will be a co-steward of the organization to ensure their mission has both financial and community support.

Prof. Martin Johnson had two essays published in Tales from the Vaults: Film Technology over the Years and Across Continents. One of these essays focused on the “Pathé-Baby 6 Color Wheel” and the other on the “Pathex Repair Kit.” Christopher Nolan wrote the introduction to this collection.

Prof. Bland Simpson and his fellow Red Clay Rambler Jack Herrick have been commissioned to compose a new dance work, The Book of Stones, for Chamber Dance Project, artistic director Diane Coburn-Bruning, for performances at Harman Hall in Washington, D.C., in June 2024. This show will also reprise Ramblin’ Suite, the first collaboration between the Ramblers and CDP, which premiered in Haywood County, N.C. (Summer 2002), before running at the Atlanta Ballet and the Milwaukee Ballet.

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Juggler’s Cat’s-Paw Ode to Remedios Varo, by María DeGuzmán
Prof. Courtney Rivard has been selected for the 2022-2023 cohort in the Institute for the Arts and Humanities’ Tyson Academic Leadership Program (ALP). The program is designed to aid current and emerging leaders through a series of activities to develop leadership capacities, clarify career commitments, and build their leadership network.

The ALP is one of the flagship programs of the Institute. During their fellowship year, the fellows attend a weeklong leadership training with the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, interacting with senior executives from across the public and private sectors, nationally and internationally. ALP fellows attend Phase 1 training through the Racial Equity Institute. In the spring, participants will attend weekly seminars to address critical issues facing the University, build strong relationships with their cohort members, and develop a better sense of self as a leader.

In October 2023, the William Blake Archive, co-edited by Prof. Joseph Viscomi, published a digital edition of Blake’s Europe a Prophecy from the British Museum. This is the first time it has been reproduced in its entirety and in color. Nine of the impressions are in early states of the design not used in published copies, and six of these are the only recorded impression of the design’s first or second state, making it possible to trace Blake’s creative process as it unfolds through production.

With its inclusion into the Archive, the production history of Europe—which exists in nine complete copies, all of which are in the Archive—is fully represented. For December 2023, the Archive is preparing digital editions of Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, printing in 1789, c. 1802, c. 1804, and c. 1811, further realizing the Archive’s objective of publishing exemplar copies from each printing of an illuminated book. Copies O, Q, and S have never been reproduced before.

Prof. Jordynn Jack (above) and PhD candidate Emma Duvall (pictured below) published a co-authored article in Rhetoric Society Quarterly titled “Reconsidering Kairos through the Gendered History of Weaving.” The article brings together Prof. Jack’s research in women’s rhetoric with Duvall’s expertise in ancient Greek to better understand the resonances of the term kairos (commonly associated with right timing) with the techne of weaving.

The article results from several years’ work that included translating ancient Greek texts, working through French scholarship on kairos (seldom cited in US rhetorical studies), studying physical objects (such as loom weights and vases that depict weaving) and watching contemporary archaeological experiments and historical re-enactments of weaving on ancient warp-weighted looms.

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Since she was in college at Wesleyan University, music and literature have been important aspects of Prof. Dore’s life: “I stayed up all night writing a paper on ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ one night and practiced ‘Dancing Barefoot’ with my band in a windowless room the next. I have no doubt that my 18-year-old-college-girl performances of Smith’s ‘strange music’ were enabled by an 18-year-old-rock-girl’s excitement about Keats’s ‘plaintive anthem,’ whipped up earlier in a classroom only a few doors down.” These passions have continued to be connected in Prof. Dore’s career, as her first book—Novel Sounds: Southern Fiction in the Age of Rock and Roll—argues that “popular music is endemic to the institutionalization of literature.”

Prof. Florence Dore recently published an article in The Chronicle of Higher Education: “My Rock ‘n’ Roll Sabbatical: A literature professor hits the road.”


Prof. Dore begins the piece by describing a phone call with a dissertation advisee that occurred while she was on the road during her rock tour. Even while pursuing her passion for rock music, Prof. Dore did not abandon her love of literature. Rather, the two have been intertwined throughout her life.

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Prof. David Baker and his fellow collaborators launched MACMORRIS (Mapping Actors & Contexts: Modeling Research in Renaissance Ireland in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century). The digital project seeks to “capture the complexity and richness of early modern Ireland, by mapping the full range of cultural activity, across languages and ethnic groups, from 1541 to 1660. This largely bilingual resource provides the first inclusive account of creative, scholarly, and intellectual activity in a time of conquest, plantation, and colonization.”

This project emerged from a conversation between Professors Baker, Patricia Palmer, and Willy Maley at the 2015 conference for the International Spenser Society in Dublin. After a few years of trying out the idea behind MACMORRIS with colleagues and brainstorming its technical implications, their panel discussion rapidly developed into a full-fledged project.

“In 2019,” says Baker, “I applied for a Fulbright U. S. Scholar Award, which I received in 2020: € 21,000 to work on MACMORRIS at Maynooth University over six months, starting in the spring of 2021. But things did not go according to schedule. COVID hit, and my stay was postponed by the Fulbright program until the fall. In speaking to the most challenging and rewarding aspects of this project, Dr. Baker said:

“The most challenging and rewarding parts were the same part: working with a team.”

“...For me, it was deeply satisfying to see our team come together around a coherent vision. MACMORRIS, as Pat likes to say, is a "cultural recovery" project that brings, insofar as it can, an almost lost milieu back into focus for present-day scholars and students. It’s accessible, useful, and information-rich. And it looks good, too!”
Pardis Dabashi visited the DOECL on October 11th and gave a lecture titled “Criticism and Revelation: On Evidence and the Limits of Argument,” which focused on David Hume’s “Of the Standard of Taste” and Stanley Cavell’s “Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy,” among other texts.

Dr. Dabashi is assistant professor of Literatures in English and Film Studies at Bryn Mawr College. She teaches classes on twentieth-century literature, film, and theory, and her research examines the intersection of form, politics, and affect in narrative film and literary modernism. Her book Losing the Plot: Film and Feeling in the Modern Novel (University of Chicago Press) was released in November.

In January, Daniel Sinykin, Assistant Professor of English at Emory University presented a lecture entitled “Big Fiction: How Conglomeration Changed the Book Industry and American Literature.” Sinykin asks, How has the conglomeration of publishing changed literature? To answer it, he enlists computational analysis alongside more traditional literary critical techniques of attending to form and historical context, including archival research.

Sinykin has built corpora on publishers, prizewinning and bestselling American literature, and reviews of tens of thousands of American novels toward writing large scale analyses of the field and revealing how money and power in publishing have shaped the state of contemporary literature.

Dr. Lauren Michele Jackson visited the DOECL in November, where she presented a lecture on her most recent projects. A contributing writer at The New Yorker, Jackson’s work includes an adventure through gamified stardom in The Sims and the racial politics of voice acting.


In March, Prof. Jennifer Fleissner gave a lecture entitled “Action, Will, Potentiality.” Her precis for the talk was as follows: “Why has contemporary theory become entranced by the idea of action without will? Framing this question through novel studies, theories of sovereignty and the political, and the philosophy of action, this talk moves to consider Claire-Louise Bennett’s 2015 novel Pond as a text that, while seeming to share this fascination, in fact opens onto its limits. In the end, the talk argues, work like that of Giorgio Agamben, which makes a fetish of an absolute, unrealized potentiality, may actually conceive of a more sovereign form of agency by getting rid of the category of will.”

Jennifer L. Fleissner is Professor of English at Indiana University, Bloomington. She is the author of Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism (Chicago 2004) and, most recently, Maladies of the Will: The American Novel and the Modernity Problem (Chicago 2022) along with numerous essays published in such journals as ELH, Critical Inquiry, American Literary History, NOVEL, and Studies in Romanticism, as well as in such collections as The Cambridge History of the American Novel. She is laying the groundwork for a new project on repetition in philosophy and the novel, as well as another titled The Human Thing.”
Delana R. A. Dameron ’08 read to a packed room in Greenlaw Hall in February, as students and faculty celebrated the release of Redwood Court, a Reese Book Club Pick. Dameron is an artist whose primary medium is storytelling. She is a graduate of New York University’s MFA program in poetry and holds a BA degree in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her debut poetry collection, How God Ends Us, was selected by Elizabeth Alexander for the South Carolina Poetry Book Prize, and her second collection, Weary Kingdom, was chosen by Nikky Finney for the Palmetto Poetry Series. Dameron is also the founder of Saloma Acres, an equestrian and cultural space in her hometown in South Carolina, where she resides.

Andrew Chan ’08 has published Why Mariah Carey Matters, a book that examines the music and artistry of one of the world’s greatest pop stars. As Chan writes, he wanted to “take her seriously as a musician, understand how her music does what it does, and explore what was happening in American culture toward the end of the 20th century that made an artist like her possible.”

Andrew Chan is a writer based in Brooklyn, New York. He graduated in 2008 from UNC-Chapel Hill, where he was a Thomas Wolfe Scholar and majored in English and Asian Studies. His work has appeared in 4Columns, Film Comment, the New Yorker, NPR and other publications. He is a senior editor at the Criterion Collection.

Ben Fountain ’80 released his latest novel, Devil Makes Three. Set in 1991, this political thriller explores power dynamics, greed, and American complicity following a violent coup in Haiti.

Born in Chapel Hill and raised in the tobacco country of eastern North Carolina, Ben Fountain has received the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction, the PEN/Hemingway Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Fiction, the Barnes & Noble Discover Award for Fiction, the PEN-Cerulli Award for Excellence in Sports Writing, a Whiting Writers Award, and has been a finalist for the National Book Award and runner-up for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize.


She received a PhD in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an MFA from the Bennington Writing Seminars, and is the author of We Have Raised All of You: Motherhood in the South, 1750-1835. She lives in New Orleans.
Prof. Sharon L. Joffe ’04 earned promotion to Associate Professor, with tenure, at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. Dr. Joffe leads present-day research on Claire Clairmont (1798-1879), best known as Mary Shelley’s step-sister, the mother of Lord Byron’s daughter Allegra, and a major source for Henry James’s novella The Aspern Papers (1888).


As a result of Dr. Joffe’s efforts, the Austrian city of Vienna declared the Clairmont family tomb an “honorary” grave in 2019, thereby saving the tomb from destruction and solidifying for posterity the Shelley-Clairmont family bond. She recounts this achievement in “Saving the Clairmont Family Tomb,” Keats-Shelley Review, vol. 34, no. 2. (2020).

Dr. James W. Clark, Jr. ’65, a graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill’s English department, received a Distinguished Alumnus Award at this year’s University Day ceremonies. The University Day ceremonies were held on Thursday, October 12th.

James Clark has distinguished himself in the humanities by combining exceptional knowledge of North Carolina’s literary and cultural history with a commitment to public service and scholarship. A native of Warren County, North Carolina, he majored in English at Carolina before earning a doctorate from Duke University. During his 38 years as a faculty member at North Carolina State University, Clark led the Humanities Extension and Publications Program, which helped generations of public school students learn about North Carolina’s multicultural history, writers and conflicts.

Dr. Clark is also a recipient of the 2020 John Tyler Caldwell Award for the Humanities, the Alexander Quaries Holladay Medal of Excellence, and the William C. Friday Award for Distinguished Service in Retirement.

Gregg Hecimovich ’91 has published The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts, a biography of the first African American female novelist, Hannah Crafts. Hecimovich writes, “It’s been a pretty cool journey for me from my time at UNC where my primary mentor was Jill McCorkle, but also Max Steele and Doris Betts. But instead of pursuing novel writing (my passion then)—I found my way into biography.”

Gregg Hecimovich is Hutchins Family Fellow at Harvard University and professor of English at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. He is the author of six books and edited volumes, including The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts, selected by The Washington Post as “One of the 10 Best Books of 2023.”

Hecimovich received his Ph.D. in English from Vanderbilt University and is a recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Humanities Center, and elsewhere.

Dean King ’85 chronicles the friendship between the naturalist John Muir and the journalist Robert Underwood Johnson in his new book Guardians of the Valley: John Muir and the Friendship That Saved Yosemite.

King is an award-winning author of ten nonfiction books. He relishes the adventures involved in making history come to life while at the same time diligently searching out the truth and turning up new historical detail. For his most recent book, Guardians of the Valley, Dean traveled to John Muir’s boyhood homes in Dunbar, Scotland, and rural Wisconsin and spent months roaming Yosemite National Park and the Sierra Nevada.

Dean’s writing has also appeared in the Daily Telegraph, Granta, Garden & Gun, National Geographic Adventure, Outside, Travel + Leisure, New York, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and Virginia Living. He is a partner in Gum Street Productions, making documentary films.
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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In honor of Randall Kenan’s extraordinary legacy as a writer, we have created the Randall Kenan Memorial Fund. Our hope is to establish a program in his name reflecting Randall’s strong commitment to the value of bringing fellow writers to campus to nurture Carolina’s literary culture and enrich its intellectual environment.

Kenan’s many publications include the story collections If I Had Two Wings (2020) and Let the Dead Bury Their Dead (1992), the novel A Visitation of Spirits (1989), and the essay collection Black Folk Could Fly: Selected Writings (2022).

His numerous honors and award include a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Whiting Writers Award, the Sherwood Anderson Award, the John Dos Passos Prize, and the 1997 Rome Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He received the North Carolina Award for Literature in 2005, was made a Fellow of the Fellowship of Southern Writers in 2007, and served as its Chancellor until 2018.

In a teaching career that spanned more than two decades, he was a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at UNC-Chapel Hill for eight years.

Your support enables us to honor Randall Kenan’s belief in the power of words and writers to promote vital conversations and to change our world.

Click here to support Kenan’s legacy of teaching excellence.

Professor James Kimball King’s impact goes far beyond the confines of traditional classroom walls and continues to reverberate through the profoundly fond memories of family, friends, former students, and the wider University community. In light of his exceptional legacy, a group of alumni are working together to create an endowed professorship in honor of Professor King, who passed away in 2019.

Reflecting fondly on his time with Prof. King, John Townsend ’77, ’82 said, “He loved what he taught, and he wanted you to love what he taught too…He wasn’t there to figure out who should get an A and who should get a C. He wanted you to love great works of art, and he was very successful at that.”

Alongside his vibrant career as a teacher, Prof. King also made many crucial advancements in the studies of dramatic literature through his illuminating research and numerous publications. During his time in the DOECL, 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.

A group of former students are currently fundraising to create an endowed professorship in honor of Prof. King, who died in 2019. With additional gifts, the Dr. J. Kimball King Distinguished Professorship will support a faculty member whose teaching and scholarship cultivate appreciation of and deeper connection with literature.

Click here to support King’s legacy of teaching excellence.