LETTER FROM PETER PAROLIN,
DEPARTMENT HEAD OF ENGLISH

We’re deep into the fall semester at the University of Wyoming and I wanted to write to tell you about a few of the exciting things going on in the English department. Faculty members Andy Fitch, Susan Frye, Alyson Hagy, Harvey Hix, Caskey Russell, Mary Sheridan, and Brad Watson have published new books. Students continue to post impressive accomplishments: most recently, senior English major Bob Weatherford was chosen as one of two students from the College of Arts and Sciences to speak at the Fall Honors Convocation on October 15. Bob did a superb job presenting his independent research, conducted last summer, in which he applied literary criticism to the Book of Mormon. Visiting writers and scholars enrich our daily life in Hoyt Hall: already this fall, there have been readings by visiting writers Rattawut Lapcharoensap (fiction), Jan Zwicky and Robert Bringhurst (poetry) and a reading/panel discussion by Wyoming writers C.J. Box, Laura Bell, and Mark Jenkins. We have also hosted the visiting scholar Mike Salvo, who directs the Rhetoric and Composition Program at Purdue, and Joan Klingel Ray, an expert on Jane Austen at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. In addition to our visiting writers, our students have been holding public readings: MFA students in Creative Writing share their work the first Friday of every month at our local Second Story bookstore; undergraduate Creative Writing students read their work at the Carriage House on campus; and our undergraduate English majors’ group, the Upstart Crows, sponsor poetry recitations, one of which is coming up in time for Thanksgiving, on November 19. Members of the public are always welcome at these events.

A couple of upcoming events are worth noting. In spring 2011, Hoyt Hall will receive some much-needed renovations courtesy of federal stimulus money. During the semester of renovation, the English department will move out of Hoyt to the Ivinson building, located on Ivinson Avenue between 10th and 11th streets. English will occupy the second and third floors, with our front office suite on the third floor. Our phone numbers will be the same as they currently are. We hope you’ll drop by and visit us this spring.

Also, in July 2011, the department will host an international conference on the life and work of Walter Scott. Our own Walter Scott scholar, Caroline McCracken-Flesher, is coordinating the conference and invites those who are interested to participate. For more information, see the story on the Scott conference in this newsletter.

I hope this letter finds all of our friends and alumni well. I thank you all for your continued interest in and support of the English department.
WELCOME TO NEW FACULTY MEMBER
JASON BASKIN

We’re delighted to welcome Jason Baskin to the English department this fall. Jason Baskin received his AB from Harvard and his PhD from Princeton. In his dissertation, he pursued his interest in modernism as a literary cultural phenomenon. From 2008-10, he held a postdoctoral fellowship at Cal Tech University. At UW he will teach and research in 20th-century American and British literature and in literary theory. This fall, Jason’s first course is English 4430, Modern American Fiction. Beyond his academic interests, Jason competed at national division 1 tennis tournaments in his undergraduate days. Jason is married to UW English professor Erin Forbes.

STAFF DEVELOPMENTS
IN ENGLISH

This summer, the English department’s long-time senior staffer, Keith Kanbe, was transferred to the Anthropology department. On September 15, English hosted a lunch to thank Keith for his 17 years of service. We greatly appreciate everything Keith did for the department and we will miss his friendly face.

Keith is being replaced as the department’s senior staff associate by Rachel Ferrell. Rachel has been with the department for three years, supporting the MFA program in Creative Writing, the journal Eighteenth-Century Life, and the English department. We are delighted to have Rachel on board in this new position. The department is in great hands.
A MAJOR DONATION: NELTJE’S GIFT

On September 1, the University announced a major gift from the Wyoming artist Neltje that will benefit the visual and literary arts. Neltje’s is the largest private gift in UW’s history and we are thrilled at the support this generous gift represents for creative writing at the university and throughout the state. I will quote briefly from the University’s Press Release:

“University of Wyoming officials said today (Wednesday) the university has received the largest estate gift in its history, a bequest that will transform the university’s role in the arts in Wyoming and across the United States.

“The estate gift is from Wyoming artist, Neltje, a prolific abstract expressionist whose works have been described as an ‘exploration of making the sensed visible.’

“The gift includes all financial and land holdings save for those going to her children and a select few personal donations. Additionally, the gift includes a world-class collection of contemporary, tribal, and ethnic arts collected by Neltje over a lifetime of travel across the globe.

“If ever there was tangible evidence of the power of philanthropy, this is it,’ UW President Tom Buchanan says. ‘We can’t thank Neltje enough for her vision and her commitment to the university and to the arts in Wyoming. It is simply remarkable.’”

UW ENGLISH HOSTS WALTER SCOTT CONFERENCE IN JULY 2011

COME ON HOME AND MEET THE SHERIFF!

In 2011, the English department hosts its first international conference. Scholars from as far afield as Britain, Hawaii, Libya, and Australia are already signing up to discuss “Walter Scott: Sheriff and Outlaw,” and we invite our alumni to join in the frolics. Scott, 1771-1832, was the dominant literary figure of his day. A lawyer, President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and agricultural improver, he nonetheless wrote famous poems (The Lady of the Lake, anyone?), pretty much invented the historical novel (Waverley, Rob Roy, Ivanhoe), was a pivotal figure in Romanticism (one of its critics, and thus never quite included in its canon), and—some say—he imagined Scotland in ways that provided the template for later ideas of the American west. He was friends with all the great and the good, and an early fan of Jane Austen. Plus he really was a sheriff—of Selkirk in the Scottish borders. And an outlaw, breaking and remaking the “rules” of literature.

The conference runs from 5-9 July, timed to overlap with Jubilee Days, and to allow visitors to experience the West at its best.

How might you join in? Check out our website at http://www.uwyo.edu/scottconf2011/ We would love to host our students as speakers or just as interested visitors.

Contact Caroline McCracken-Flesher ASAP if you want to offer a paper, but can’t make the November 15 deadline: cmf@uwyo.edu

Neltje’s land holdings are situated in the Big Horn Mountains in northern Wyoming. Her transformational gift will elevate the university to a unique model of commitment to the arts and their centrality to higher education.
FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS


In spring 2010, the Fred Slater Award for Excellence in Teaching Lower-Division English courses went to Pam Galbreath and Luke Stricker.

In spring 2010, the Synergy Program’s PIE award for Promoting Intellectual Engagement included English faculty Pam Galbreath, Duncan Harris, Jason Thompson, and Bob Torry.

In summer 2010, Pam Galbreath received a Wyoming Arts Council creative writing fellowship in creative nonfiction. Since receiving her MFA in Creative Writing from UW, Pam has published essays in *The North American Review*, *The Vermont Literary Review*, *South Loop Review*, *trailBLAZER Magazine*, *Saw Palm*, *The Emerson Review*, and *Lumina*.

In spring 2010, lecturer and LeaRN director April Heaney received extended-term status and promotion to associate lecturer. Congratulations, April!

In spring 2010, Alyson Hagy won the Mary Lindner Faculty Research Award, which provided a stipend for summer research.


In spring 2010, English’s longtime faculty member, Eric Nye, won the Ellbogen Award, UW’s highest teaching award.

In spring 2010, Eric Nye and Peter Parolin were named A&S Top Ten Teachers by the graduating class of 2010.

In spring 2010, faculty member Caskey Russell received tenure and promotion to associate professor. Congratulations, Caskey!


In spring 2010, Mary P. Sheridan published *Design Literacies: Learning and Innovation in the Digital Age* (Routledge). This book is co-written with Jennifer Roswell.

In spring 2010, the award for Excellence in Teaching Freshman Honors went to Bob Torry.

In spring 2010, lecturer Meg Van Baalen-Wood received extended-term status and promotion to associate lecturer. Congratulations, Meg!


In spring 2010, faculty member Brad Watson received tenure and promotion to associate professor. Congratulations, Brad!

In spring 2010, Alyson Hagy published *Ghosts of Wyoming* (Graywolf Press).

STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

At our Spring Banquet in April, the English department awarded scholarships to the following outstanding students:

The Clara F. McIntyre scholarship went to Leihanne Allen, Celia Bannan, Rosa Beyer, Leslie Gallagher, Angela Kisse, Jacklynn Pham, and Hannah Twitchell. The W. O. Clough scholarship went to Rebecca Mueller (MA student), Scott Rosenberg (MFA), and Kevin Thompson. The J. F. & Margaret Wilson scholarship went to Rachel Bouzis and Katie Schmid (MFA). The Sandy Schwartzkopf scholarship went to Celyn Flory. The Ruth Hudson scholarship went to Heidi Lichtfuss. The H.G. Merriam Award for Creative Work in the Humanities went to Joan Innes, Kevin Thompson, and Emily Trostel (MFA). The Jane Tanner Award for Study Abroad went to Laura Curran and Lauren Perry. The College of Arts and Sciences gave summer independent study awards to Stephanie Dugger (MFA), Kelly Herbinson (MFA) and Robert Weatherford.

The College of Arts and Sciences chose graduating senior Lindsey Grubbs as an A&S Top Twenty student.

In spring 2010, the Ellbogen Award for Outstanding Classroom Teaching by a Graduate Student went to Lucas Street (MFA).

In summer 2010, Rory Gunderman received the American Heritage Center’s Undergraduate Research Award for his paper “New Historical Theory and an Anti-Masonic Edgar.” This award carried a $500 prize. Rory’s advisor on this project was Jeanne Holland.
ENGLISH MATTERS!
A FALL SYMPOSIUM

On October 21, English hosted an evening symposium, “English Matters,” to showcase our undergraduate major. About 60 people, including 25 undergraduate panelists, gathered in Hoyt Hall to spotlight the diverse activities that occur in all corners of the department. Panels explored Creative Writing; English and Education; Women Writers; the Upstart Crows; Outcomes for the Undergraduate Curriculum; Professional Writing; and the perennial question, “Why I am an English Major.” The “English Matters” symposium showcased the intellectual power and confidence that characterize our English majors. I thank everyone who took part in this event. In this newsletter, I share with you the comments of two panelists who responded to the question, “Why I am an English Major.”

Jacklynn Pham is a senior in English who hails from La Vista, Nebraska. Tim Raymond is an MFA student in Creative Writing. Originally from Casper, WY, Tim holds his B.A. in English from UW and his MA in English from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

Gwynn Lemler joined the English department as our newest staff member on October 25. I’d like to welcome Gwynn warmly—I know she’s going to be a wonderful addition to our team. Gwynn comes to us from the UW Libraries where she worked as Library Assistant, Senior, in Technical Services. Having worked on the UW campus for ten years, Gwynn has a lot of knowledge about how the university operates. Gwynn was hired after Keith Kanbe was transferred to the Anthropology department, but she is not a direct replacement for Keith. We’ve in effect created a new position for her with a new configuration of duties. Gwynn will be our office associate responsible for graduate studies—she’ll be supporting both the MA and MFA programs, working closely with their directors and students. She’ll also be doing general English department support. Please join me in welcoming Gwynn Lemler.

English majors Susannah Malarkey, Jill Kristensen, Travis Hetland, and Ellie Bolender at the English Matters! symposium, where they presented on English and Education.
I’m currently a senior this year majoring in English with minors in professional writing and graphic design. I plan on using my English major to be a graphic designer in the future. The slant of my presentation is going to be how I believe that an English degree can lead to a variety of different career opportunities.

I think some of you might be wondering why I’m an English major if I want to be a designer. I strongly believe these two sides of my education work extremely well together and have given me a dynamic set of skills for my future.

The first reason I’m English major is that I love the literary theory side of it and the classes. The English major is difficult, but there is no other subject that I would be willing to work as hard for as I do for my English major. The challenging classes engage with discussion, forcing us to evaluate deeply what we’re reading or learning and in turn to write about it intelligently. During almost all of my classes I’ve been in awe of how intelligent, insightful, and passionate our professors are, so the English major is never boring. I wouldn’t necessarily advise just anyone to go into the English major if you aren’t prepared for a challenge, but it’s something I love.

The second reason I’m an English major is that I believe that more than any other major, it has so many practical applications to a variety of different careers. English majors learn how to think differently, to think critically, to analyze, and to communicate. And there is no employer who doesn’t want someone who can do that. Anyone can learn how to use a computer, work with others, and network, but through our education in the English department we develop these alternative skills which can’t just be picked up. Our experiences in the classroom are irreplaceable.

In particular, I feel confident that the courses I’ve taken for my professional writing minor align perfectly with my graphic design courses. The minor focuses on new media and its effect on communication, which of course is extremely relevant since computers are becoming a dominant part of our daily lives. The minor covers things like writing in public forums, grant writing, editing, technical communication, and even creative...
writing like journalism and magazine writing. I’m not learning things I’ve already assumed, but I’m exploring the rhetoric of how new media works, learning how to talk about it, and learning how to communicate through it most effectively.

I think the assumption that you have to be a teacher with the English major is wrong. Mike Salvo, a visiting English department speaker, spoke a couple of weeks ago about the opportunity English majors have in business. He said that most employers tell you what they want from you (“know this program, type this fast, and have good customer service skills”), but with an English major, you can tell employers what you can do for them: “Yes, I can learn that program, but I also can help you solve complicated problems, think critically in tough situations, and communicate with your clients better.” I have a different set of skills that can’t just be picked up.

Even though I want to be a graphic designer, I’m majoring in English. Anyone can learn how to use the design programs, but if you can’t be creative, innovative, and impactful as a designer, you will never get the job you want, where you’ll feel challenged and know that your work is meaningful. An English major can help you do anything.

WHY I AM AN ENGLISH MAJOR
BY TIM RAYMOND

English is changing. And English departments are changing. For years now, I’ve seen or taken English courses focusing on television, film, architecture, music, and comics, in addition to more commonly known classes like, for me, early American literature, Shakespeare, modernism. My first year in an English master’s program, I talked to a colleague developing courses interested in gaming, in online gaming cultures writing like journalism and magazine writing. I’m not learning things I’ve already assumed, but I’m exploring the rhetoric of how new media works, learning how to talk about it, and learning how to communicate through it most effectively.

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and communities, and how each relates to language, or community, or identity. Another course in the works tackles, among other things, romance novels, modern day fairy tales, even Buffy the Vampire Slayer fan fiction. The goal here is to figure out just what people do, or mean, when they write. And overall it really seems that every single part of modern culture has come, or will soon come, under the gaze of students and teachers of English.

English departments like ours here teach you, put simply, to read culture in all its forms. Students of English learn how to decode, pick apart, understand the images, narratives, and stories that surround them—images, narratives, and stories that exist everywhere, in the smallest detail, in the novels on our shelves, in the commercials we watch on Hulu, in the buildings we have here on campus.

The good thing is this: once students recognize the stories cultures build, they can adopt, shift, change, or reject those stories. In addition to reading culture, students of English effectively learn how to write culture. Writing like this represents a form of empowerment that many departments on campus can’t match. And English departments are useful in teaching students just how to situate themselves within their surroundings.

I came to English, like many, confused. Without a major, I eventually chose English because, for one, I found it difficult. This is a good thing, I think. Our day-to-day lives are filled with quick answers. Our world is fast-paced. Everything, thanks to technology, is at our fingertips. Ask Google. Watch Netflix. And so on. For this reason, it’s difficult to take the time, as English departments ask you to do, to appreciate what’s before us, which is too bad. As students of English will tell you, it’s so pleasurable to care for the little things, at length. I had a teacher one time who talked, literally, for two hours, about five words. It was a wonderful experience, both because I rarely have the experience, but also because it’s such an important one. Appreciation, extended appreciation, is vital.

I’ve been teaching with my English degrees, but there’s so much to do. Critical thinking skills are so valuable. In the end, though, these degrees aren’t only about careers. They’re about the learning process. You hear stories about people afraid to enter the Humanities, fearing they’ll never get a job. And that’s fine, in some ways. College certainly, in part, is about finding a career path, and entering the job market. But college, and education in general, doesn’t have to be career-minded at all. It absolutely doesn’t. A mind set on the job market will often ignore too much.

So I leave you with this: let yourself think for now. And let yourself turn an eye on what surrounds you every day. Thank you.