

# HAPPENINGS: ENGLISH NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

FALL 2009

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR, PETER PAROLIN

As I write this letter, I am sitting amid an intrepid group of my Shakespeare students who have shown up at Hoyt Hall on the Sunday before Thanksgiving to watch a film version of *Twelfth Night* (directed by Trevor Nunn in 1996, a very good film in case you're interested). They're a great group of students and they remind me that serving our students well is the most important thing we do in the English department. We have almost 300 majors and minors now and we strive to provide them with a great education every day, through the wide range of courses we offer in literature, creative writing, and rhetoric and composition, and through the close attention we give to student work. Our students respond with excellence – it is a privilege to see them grapple with new ideas in the classroom and push us all to new levels of insight. I'm proud of our students as I'm sure you are, too, as friends and alums of UW English. With these thoughts in mind, I have designed this Fall's newsletter with a special emphasis on student voices. I wanted you to hear for yourself what our students are saying about why they've chosen to study English.

Of course, you'll also read in this newsletter about our new faculty as well as the visitors, readings, and other initiatives that have defined the department this Fall and helped us maintain an environment in which our students can thrive. I wish you all the very best for a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year in 2010.

## SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS: COMMENTS FROM OUR CLASSROOMS

This Fall, a few English department faculty members asked their students to write some comments about why they are English majors and what their studies mean to them. In this newsletter I include a generous selection of what they had to say; if you are interested to read more, you can find the full gamut of student comments by going to our website at <http://www.uwyo.edu/english> and clicking "English Department Newsletters."

I hope that reading these student comments will remind many of you of the intellectual stimulation you had in the UW English department as well as the subjects that continue to interest you today.

### **From English 2425, Barbara Logan's sophomore survey course in early literature**

#### **Susan Gilmore, from Lakewood, CO.**

Being an English major enables you to experience beyond your own life. Literature gives an understanding not only of history, but of economics, production, social structures, peasants and kings. English is important because it helps you to achieve a broader understanding outside of your own scope and interests; the subjects and evolution of language are boundless and thus so are the educational possibilities.

#### **Katie Hoyt, a junior English major from Powell, WY**

I have always been an avid reader, and I tend to seclude myself while reading a good book. But now that I am an English major, I still get to read all the time and enjoy great literature, but there are other people like me that feel the same way! And it is an amazing feeling to have someone else know what you are talking about when you start talking "books." Generally I used to get the blank stare, but not anymore!

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### SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENT PERSPECTIVES CONT'D.

#### **Jill Schulze, a senior English major**

The University of Wyoming department of English has reshaped and redirected my way of thinking. I have learned to dig deeper than the surface and unearth the unobvious. I have learned analytical and writing skills that will reach into every aspect of life, offering greater meaning and better understanding to myself and others. The UW department of English has brought vibrancy to literature, but more importantly, the department has helped me bring vibrancy to life.

#### **Bob Weatherford, from Laramie, WY**

The English major asks its disciples to understand their cultural, linguistic, and artistic inheritance in hopes that, with this added knowledge, they can fashion the lives that they intend to live. A rigorous study of writings and cultures past and present yields understanding of things as seemingly simple as the evolution of a word to things as complex as the development of capitalism and democracy in the contemporary United States. The study of English reminds us that, without a firm understanding of the way things came to be, we are hopeless to sculpt them into the things we desire.

On perhaps a less profound level, the study of English to me serves a hedonistic, aesthetic purpose. I have often smiled to myself as I read a sentence in *Moby Dick* in which almost every word begins with an alliterative consonant. I have found lines of poetry reverberating through my otherwise inchoate mind ("Thus quoth the raven, Nevermore!"). I have derived much pleasure from the mere utility and joviality of words and their infinite combinations.

#### **From English 4050, Val Pexton's upper-division course in creative writing, fiction**

##### **Andrew Call, a Creative Writing minor from Afton, WY**

It's great to finally have a class where the students aren't afraid to voice their opinions when it comes to constructive criticism. It's not often that you're told to just unleash the creative beast and experiment with your writing. In this class you don't have to feel self-conscious about how bizarre or surreal the story gets, because everyone is here to critique the writing and help you evolve and progress as a writer.

##### **Hilary Havlik, a Creative Writing Minor from Lead, SD**

What excites me about this particular English class this semester is that I really feel that I've been progressing as a writer through the help of the workshops and insightful advice from my professor. I appreciate the friendly yet productive environment that this class affords me. I feel like I'm learning to take a step outside my comfort zone and beginning to try new things that might better my writing.

#### **From English 2080, Kate Northrop's sophomore course in creative writing, poetry**

##### **Meghan Lockhart from Rochester, MN**

This poetry course especially excites me because when analyzing poems in class, I am forced to read each individual word to put a specific meaning and weight on that word in correspondence with not only the line, but also with the stanza, the broader form, the rhyme scheme, and the underlying meaning. When utilizing and

**Lockhart Cont'd.**

manipulating tools we learn in class, it becomes an exciting challenge to invoke thought and emotion through the organization of words, just as a picture collage does through imagery. Each word or image has its own meaning, but when placed together in the poem or in the collage, the words and images work together to create an aesthetic work of art that is both provoking and beautiful.

**From English 4990, Cliff Marks's Senior Seminar Class****Troy Kavanagh, a senior from Jackson, WY, studying English Education**

At 37, I might be what is considered a non-traditional student here UW. Because my BA in English from Florida State (1994) was a bit dated by today's university standards, fortunately, I was made to take Senior Seminar as part of my overall educational requirements for English teacher education. I say fortunately, because at first, it seemed it was simply another stick in my tire spokes in my trying to change careers. It wasn't.

I want to voice my appreciation for Prof. Marks's unique approach to the subject. His textual choices always begged us to think in larger, more abstract terms--sometimes truly stretching our connection to world literature (not simply American, British, etc.). I felt that we did recall plenty of the more familiar and spent paths of literary criticism and theory, but took on so much more--investigating the complexities of neurology, sub-atomic physicality, and particular West vs. Non-West considerations of critical thinking. The challenge seemed overwhelming at every corner, but very reassuring as well for that very reason. It wasn't simply the worn-out path of a few critical theorists.

**Scott Service, an English Education senior from San Jose, CA**

The class has been strong overall. I was nervous heading in, probably most about the reading list. We have read some interesting science-based, theory-related texts (Intros to Brain, Quantum Theory) along with Intros to Postcolonialism and Literary Theory. Almost all of it was new to me. That felt daunting in the beginning, and even as we engaged in the texts. However, the motivation (I believe) for Dr. Marks has been to broaden our horizons; to inspire us to think differently about the way we think, which would in turn affect the way we think about literature. My gut response is that the aim of the professor has been achieved. Certainly the class has been challenging, but generally enjoyable. I have a close friend in there, and we have discussed how the class rose to the challenge of our fears and expectations. Just another illustration of the mostly positive experience I have had in English at UW.

**From English 5000, Eric Nye's graduate course in Jane Austen**

In this class, several undergraduates have had the chance to do high-level study in Austen alongside their graduate student colleagues.

**Ellie Bolender, from Casper, WY**

The two main things I love about this course:

- 1) It is very much based in discussion. I love being able to dig into these books and discuss why we, as a class and a society, love to read Austen. I love listening to the comments and ideas of my peers and having my own contributions valued in return.
- 2) In public education, English classes were always my favorite. My primary complaint, one which I hope to rectify in my own career as a high school teacher, was always that the books we read in English classes were written by men, about male characters. As much as I enjoyed *Ivanhoe*, *The Great Gatsby* and others, as a woman, I couldn't help but feel as though I was left out. Women in literature classes are often expected to

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### **Bolender, Cont'd.**

engage with novels about men, but men are rarely challenged to buy into "chick books." Austen's works are an amazing testament to the needless preference in male-centered lit. courses. Though most of my classmates in seminar are women, the men who have enrolled in the class provide such a different perspective on these books. I think that there is something so beautiful about a course like this in its appreciation of the literary contributions of Jane Austen and her insight into the condition of woman.

### **Lindsey Hanlon, from Cheyenne, WY**

I know that my classmate Ellie has already written about the importance of a Jane Austen class as a class focused on a female author, but I don't believe that this importance can be overstated. So often what we include in our idea of the "canon" of fiction has little to no room for the female voice. In survey classes we may get to rest for a few minutes of class on the women who have managed to infiltrate the largely male canon. Though every moment is precious in a survey class, time spent often comes down to a contest between authors, and often the female author will not walk away the victor. Though we have seminars on some of the greatest authors, such as Shakespeare, Milton, and Dickens, these are still the great *male* authors of the literary canon. This is why the Austen seminar is so important, and so exhilarating.

In the Austen seminar, we are allowed to focus our attention on a great female author, with incredible female protagonists. It sometimes feels as if we are being allowed in on a secret that the "adults" don't want us to know about: women write great fiction, too! Austen is a wit, a master craftswoman in the art of dialogue, with characters so striking and yet so complex that no two Austen fans will agree on the exact points that make them love or hate a certain character. Each reading and re-reading of Austen's work will uncover new gems to marvel over. In a survey, we may be lucky to stumble upon one of Austen's works, and assume that it speaks for all of her writing.

### **Jill Kristensen, from Laramie, WY**

I've really enjoyed Austen Seminar this semester, and found it really exciting to learn about one author specifically. I was never a fan of Austen until I got into this class and started to delve deeper into her writing and her life. The great thing about doing an author-specific seminar is that it narrows the class down to a small amount of people that are interested in exploring the same topic. Seminar has created a great atmosphere to debate and discuss Austen and her works, and that is such a stimulating learning environment. There's been so much that I have taken away from seminar already; not only a better understanding of Austen's work and its connection to other literature, but also enrichment from working with the fantastic students in the class.

### **Anna O'Rourke, a senior English major from Gillette, WY**

When I heard that a Jane Austen seminar was being offered I immediately began taking steps to ensure my enrollment. What have I learned? I feel that I have grown in many ways as a direct result of this course. I am a more observant and poised reader and am continually attempting to improve my writing in the areas of literary criticism and analysis. Also of infinite benefit has been my interaction with Dr. Nye and my peers in the course throughout our seminar sessions. This is not a course to take if the thought of spending most (if not all) of your "spare" time wrapped up in a novel is aversive to you. However, any English major that finds it aversive should possibly rethink his or her course of study. It's Jane Austen for Pete's sake!

## **SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENT PERSPECTIVES CONT'D.**

### **From English 5000, Harvey Hix's graduate course, "States/States"**

In this course, too, undergraduates have been able to study alongside their graduate colleagues.

#### **Lindsey Grubbs, from Cheyenne, WY**

Being at the University of Wyoming is so exciting because it allows you to work closely with incredible teachers. This year, as an undergraduate student, I had the opportunity to be in a seven-student class with Harvey Hix, which has been incredibly influential for me. The class exposes us to difficult novels and Harvey pushes us to confront what is difficult about them in a way that pushes me to live and read responsibly and with an eye to subtlety. It sounds hyperbolic, but it's true...and it's an opportunity I'm not sure I would have had at many other schools.

## **SPOTLIGHT ON STUDY ABROAD: THE TANNER SCHOLARSHIP**

Through the generosity of the Tanner family, the English department is able to give several awards each year to support undergraduate study abroad. These awards currently run between \$1000 and \$3000 each. They make a big difference in our students' lives as Angela Kisse and Debby Sneed, two of last year's Tanner winners, attest in the following paragraphs:

#### **Angela Kisse, from Cheyenne, WY, used her Tanner scholarship to fund a semester of study in London, England**

The constant ebb and flow of a city such as London makes it nearly impossible for an individual to remain unchanged. As a girl brought up in a town of 2,500 people, the majority of whom were family, friends and neighbors, I rediscovered and most definitely redefined a part of myself. I arrived in London, alone with three large suitcases at 5:30 in the morning of January 9<sup>th</sup>, not having any idea where I was going or how I was going to get there. But as I wandered around the borough of Bloomsbury in the crisp dawn air, I knew this was going to be an experience I would never forget. As the days turned into weeks, and the weeks into months, the fear of the unfamiliar gave way to the appreciation of the simple things in such an immense place. Things like walking past a funeral procession and hearing the notes of a bagpipe contrasting itself to the rush of morning traffic or falling asleep to a small snow storm one Sunday evening and waking up to one of the biggest cities in the world shut down on account of four inches of white fluff.

#### **Debby Sneed, from Cheyenne, WY, used her Tanner scholarship to participate in an archaeological dig in Greece in the summer of 2009**

At present I am living in Savannah, Georgia. I moved here shortly after returning from Greece early in August. I was there from mid-May until early August this year, for about ten weeks. My father was able to go with me before the dig began, and we spent a significant amount of time on Crete before doing a short tour of the mainland (we went up to Delphi and spent a bit of time in Athens). As I could have predicted, I had a wonderful time. I was able to excavate a ritualistic pyre this summer (its purpose is unknown, but this was, like, the twenty-somethingth one they've found in a relatively small area), during which time I removed 23 fully and partially complete vessels, in miniature, from the ground. I also excavated some water pipes that take water out of Athens to a gymnasium quite a distance from the city center. These were two big projects that I was lucky enough to be given the privilege of working on.

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### SPOTLIGHT ON NEW FACULTY

This fall, we welcomed two new faculty members to the department, Andy Fitch and Erin Forbes, as well as Val Pexton, who has been with us for several years as a lecturer and who this year moves into an extended-term position. These faculty members are already contributing to the vital life of the department, as you can see from the following interviews done by graduate students Evie Hemphill, Shannon McKinzie, and Katie Schmid.

#### **8 Questions, 500 words: An interview with nonfiction professor Andy Fitch** **By Evie Hemphill**

**Evie.** What has drawn you to the world of writing?

**Andy.** I like deferred gratification -- working on things that take a long time.

**Evie.** Are there specific literary influences you can identify?

**Andy.** Too many influences to name. I forget content right away, but my mind keeps track of stylistic touches and methodological practices that interest me. Visual artists and filmmakers provide a more direct influence (I think it's even "literary"): Andy Warhol, Cindy Sherman, Ed Ruscha and Stephen Shore in a pop-related vein; Jean-Luc Goddard, Agnes Varda, Hollis Frampton and Jonas Mekas in film. I'll look at this work and think, "Finally I know how to write."

**Evie.** Your recent dissertation, "Pop Poetics: Between Lyric and Language," sounds fascinating. Can you give me a 30-second summary of what you're after in that project?

**Andy.** Pop-inflected poetic projects by Joe Brainard, James Schulyer, Eileen Myles, and David Trinidad rarely receive attention as exemplary experimental texts. This dissertation thus introduces the concept of "pop poetics" as a metacritical third-term by which to problematize reductive distinctions between "lyric" and "language-based" postwar poetry. It probes the constructive, yet constrictive, schema by which critics have sought to canonize "radical poetry," "serial poetry," and "New York School" poetry, even as it posits a direct relation between pop poetics and the modernist grid, the mixed-media assemblage, the serialized gallery display, and the serialized art manifesto. Didn't even take thirty seconds. I just pasted it.

**Evie.** How would you characterize your approach to the nonfiction genre?

**Andy.** Creative nonfiction should take advantage of its amorphous, oppositional status (getting defined by what it is not: fiction, journalism, poetry, philosophy, etc.) for as long as possible, and revel in this freedom, and make everybody else jealous.

**Evie.** What do you find to be the most difficult part of your writing process? What comes easiest?

**Andy.** Difficulty: I have no capacity to make things up. Ease: Ideas for conceptual projects.

**Evie.** With your fresh experience navigating publication, what advice do you have for young writers preparing to enter that territory?

**Andy.** Start a journal, or a press, or a non-solipsistic blog so that people need to know who you are. Make sure it looks nice.

**Evie.** Is there a class you recall as your best experience teaching? Why was it so worthwhile?

**Andy.** I very much enjoyed emphasizing online audio materials in a Multicultural American Literature course this spring. I could never predict which students would enjoy a particular piece.

**Evie.** When you're not reading or writing or teaching, what do you enjoy doing?

**Andy.** Talking to my girlfriend, cooking, stretching, animals.

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### **From Plainville to the Plains: Erin Forbes, by Shannon McKinzie, MA Student**

Having met Erin Forbes before she accepted the job and made the journey here, my joy was instantaneous when I found out she was going to be a part of the English department at the University of Wyoming. Now, months after our first meeting, I was enthusiastic and curious as I sat down to talk with her. This is what she shared with me.

Erin was born in Plainville, Connecticut, where she grew up with her mother and brother. When I asked her if it was because everyone from there was “Plain,” she laughed and said, “Basically.” However, the small town she grew up in quickly turned into the big city of New York. She commuted from her home in the city to Princeton while she worked on, and received, her PhD. She then moved to the hills of Los Angeles where she lived with her husband, Jason Baskin, her dog, Lola, and her cat, Winston.

When she left the coast, she headed for the plains of Wyoming. You could feel Erin’s enthusiasm when she said, “I am very excited to be here.” I inquired as to what she believed the biggest transition has been for her; she replied, “We bought a house.” She was open about her struggles as she began discussing the differences between city life and life in a small town. Her eyes lit up with excitement and confusion as she professed that she now has a fish pond.

Erin is teaching two sophomore classes on campus this semester. The first, Literature Survey III, is a class that looks at literature from 1865 to the present. She is also teaching Introduction to African American Literature, which gives Erin an opportunity to share with her students a great number of different texts that she hopes will provoke them to be “open to change.” Next spring she is excited to offer Literature of Enslavement, which explores many different genres of literature “from colonial times through the end of the Reconstruction in 1877.” Erin finds it consistently important to emphasize and explore the “relationship between history, politics, and literature” in her classes.

When asked about future plans, Erin discussed her dreams of publishing, while also beginning her newest research project, the history of spiritualism in relation to 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature. With such exciting ideas to explore, we are lucky in welcoming Erin Forbes to the University of Wyoming.



Andy Fitch



Erin Forbes

## “There are so many good stories here”: Val Pexton on the writing life, the teacher’s life, & the zombie’s life. By Katie Schmid

Assistant Lecturer and fiction writer Val Pexton agrees to talk with me about her interests as a writer and as a composition and creative writing lecturer. All goes well until a rogue band of zombies hijacks the conversation.

**Katie.** Where are you from originally? What drew you to Wyoming?

**Val.** I grew up on a small cattle ranch about an hour and a half north of Laramie, closer to Douglas, but after high school I lived in Washington and northern California for about ten years, going to college and then working a lot of bad jobs. I came back to Wyoming for lots of reasons: all of my family lives here, the air is clean, there’s no traffic, and you can’t beat the blue sky. And there are so many good stories here.

**Katie.** You’ve been in the English department now as both as student (receiving your MFA and MA at UW) and as a lecturer. Can you describe your most rewarding experience in the English department as a student, and as an instructor?

**Val.** Hmm. As far as being a student goes, for the MA I just enjoyed the other folks who were there with me; plus, it was nice to have an excuse to read and write and not feel guilty about it. When I was working on the MFA I was also teaching full time, so it’s a bit of a blur. The most rewarding part of the MFA was that it forced me to finish the collection of short stories I’d been working on for too many years. As an instructor, the rewards come from the students. I love being in the classroom, talking to students, trying to help them succeed.

**Katie.** You teach composition courses as well as fiction workshops, and are in charge of the creative writing minor. In addition to teaching, are you involved in any exciting long-term writing projects you might tell us about?

**Val.** Well, any writing I do is long-term! I’m very slow, plodding almost, when I’m writing. I am working on a new collection of short stories, based on people who do odd things for a living, and I’ve started a novel based on a character from some short stories I wrote a few years ago.

**Katie.** I look forward to reading your work! Given that you’re in the midst of some big projects, I wonder if you might address the way you tackle these different collections. How does the process for writing a novel differ from writing a collection of short stories? Do you conceive of a story altogether, or do you write your way into it?

**Val.** I’m new to the novel writing, and I think I’m a short story writer at heart, so I don’t know that I have anything very interesting to say about the differences. I do feel that I need to have a real “big picture” view for the novel while I’m writing whereas with a short story I can usually get away with beginning with a character and a situation and let it take its course.

**Katie.** On your faculty profile page, you list zombie movies as one of your interests. Can I ask you: “28 Days Later” or “Dawn of the Dead”? What are the chances of starting up an English Department zombie appreciation club?

**Val.** There’s no real choice to be made here—both are great movies (although you don’t specify which “Dawn” you are talking about—original or remake?). “28 Days Later” is a cool take on zombies, that they are just concentrated human rage. “Dawn,” in both its incarnations, makes a commentary on zombie as consumer (returning to the mall where they used to shop and spend all of their time, and, of course, the cannibalism). And then, there’s “Shaun of the Dead,” the best satire of the zombie movie, human apathy, and reality TV. It’s all good stuff as far as I’m concerned. Finally, if you haven’t seen “Zombieland,” you should! You can see that I could easily be the president of a zombie appreciation club.



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### Pexton Cont'd.

**Katie.** “Shaun of the Dead,” is terribly funny. As for “Dawn,” I meant the remake—I haven’t seen the original! Which do you prefer? I think “Dawn of the Dead” is one of the scariest movies I’ve seen. Something about setting the apocalypse in an utterly mundane setting is terribly creepy. (I valued “28 Days Later” for those sweeping shots of emptied-out London, too...and the hospital scene when the protagonist first wakes up.) Can you attribute the Western world’s obsession with zombies to some insidious, strange desire...or are zombie movies simply a vehicle for exploring human nature? Broad, sweeping generalizations are encouraged.

**Val.** You should definitely see the original. There’s a great scene where the still-humans are watching the huge crowd of zombies mill around inside the mall. One character asks why the zombies are in the mall and the answer is that, in their mindless state, they are returning to the place where they spent all of their time. The implication, of course, is that they were always mindless! I love it. Zombies continue to be interesting because the fears they invoke continue to haunt us: fear of losing control, fear of cannibalism, fear of contagion, all that good stuff. And of course, unlike battling monsters or aliens, when we battle zombies, we are battling ourselves. How is that for sweeping generalizations?

**Katie.** Perfect.



Val Pexton

## FACULTY NEWS AND NOTES

\*\*\* **Susan Aronstein and Sandy Clark** attended a two-day workshop in Long Beach, CA, on assessing the English major, which provided an important opportunity to learn about assessment in the context of the discipline of English.

\*\*\***Harvey Hix** was awarded the A&S Extraordinary Merit in Research award this fall for his prolific publishing of significant volumes of poetry. Since the last time Harvey won this award, three years ago, his publications have included *God Bless!*, *Legible Heavens*, and the just-released *Incident Light*. Congratulations, Harvey.

\*\*\***Colin Keeney**, who directs the Wyoming Writing Project, reports that the Project made significant progress in 2009. In July, the WWP hosted a three-week Invitational Summer Institute in Hoyt Hall. The twelve writing fellows who participated are among Wyoming’s finest public school teachers, and they literally represent all four corners of the state (Gillette to Mountain View, Star Valley to Cheyenne). The group gave a presentation at the All School Improvement Conference in September, and in November, seven members flew to Philadelphia for the National Writing Project’s annual meeting. For more information, check out the WWP’s website: [www.uwyo.edu/wwp](http://www.uwyo.edu/wwp).

\*\*\*Assistant Visiting Lecturer **Nina McConigley** had a story, "Curating Your Life" in the Fall 2009 issue of *American Short Fiction*. Nina also most recently ran the reading series at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in August 2009.

\*\*\***Caroline McCracken-Flesher** has published “‘Perfectly Ludicrous’: The Game of National Meaning in The Three Perils of Man,” in Sharon Alker and Holly Nelson eds., *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009). In November, she attended the Modernist Studies Association conference in Montreal, and presented the paper “‘The Voice of Scotland’? Hugh MacDiarmid and the Problem of James Bridie's Success.”

## Faculty News and Notes Cont'd.

\*\*\***Peter Parolin** published his article, “‘What Revels are in Hand’: A Change of Direction at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival” in the summer 2009 issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Peter keynoted the Wooden O Symposium in Cedar City, Utah, in August, giving a paper on *Henry V*.

\*\*\***Caskey Russell** was awarded the A&S Extraordinary Merit in Teaching award this fall for his excellent teaching in a variety of courses including American Indian Literature and American Indian Humor. Congratulations, Caskey, on your wonderful teaching and on this well-deserved honor.

\*\*\***Brad Watson** has had his story, “Visitation,” selected for the annual anthology of *O. Henry Prize Stories*, forthcoming in 2010. His story “Vacuum” has been accepted for publication in the literary magazine *Granta*. As well, Brad’s powerful new collection of short stories, *Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives*, is forthcoming from Norton in Spring 2010. Congratulations, Brad!

\*\*\***Jason Thompson** On Saturday, October 24th, the English Department's Interactive Media Lab co-directors Jason Thompson and Aaron Perrell, along with the FarmHouse Fraternity, sponsored the 1st Annual Retro Video Game Tournament. The IML received funding from the English Department, as well as from local businesses Alltel, Hastings, Ace Hardware, the Knothole, and GameStop; all proceeds from the tournament benefited Child's Play, the gamer's charity that purchases consoles and titles for children's hospitals. To view excerpts from the event, as well as to see what's going on with the Lab, visit <http://daedalus.dighumanities.org>



Peter Parolin



Caskey Russell



Brad Watson



Jason Thompson

## FALL VISITORS

The MFA Visiting Writers Series featured memorable readings, book signings, meals, and discussions with fiction writers **Rebecca Curtis**, **Don DeLillo**, and **Thomas King**. Poet/playwright **Claudia Rankine** taught a course in September / October as one of this year’s eminent writers in residence. Our eminent writers in the spring will be the noted non-fiction writer **Philip Gourevitch** and the Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, **Edward P. Jones**.

The MA speaker series welcomed **Alan Nadel** from the University of Kentucky and **Kathleen Blake Yancey** of Florida State University to share their expertise in film studies and composition assessment scholarship, respectively.

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