This is an exciting time to be part of English at the University of Wyoming. We have thriving new programs, excellent faculty pursuing important research, and wonderful students achieving extraordinary success. We have welcomed some of the world’s great writers and scholars to our lecture halls. While we say goodbye this year to some of our finest faculty members, we are also bringing promising new colleagues on board. On top of all this, we have a supportive university administration encouraging us to chart an ambitious course for the future, build on our strengths, and assert the value of the humanities at UW and across the state. So, we’re doing well and we’re moving forward. Here now are just a few of today’s English highlights. I look forward to writing future newsletters, telling you, our friends and alumni, about the continuing progress of a department that has played an important part in all of our lives. In the meantime, please drop by our website at: http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/English/

From the Chair, Peter Parolin

Salman Rushdie to Visit this

Our sponsorship of visiting writers continues on September 25-26, 2008, when Salman Rushdie comes to campus. A major public figure, Rushdie won the Booker Prize for his wondrous 1981 novel *Midnight’s Children*; in 1992, the novel was awarded the Booker of Bookers as the best work to win that award in 25 years. Rushdie is perhaps best known for his controversial 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*, which prompted Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini to impose a *fatwa* calling for Rushdie to be killed. Khomeini’s edict made Rushdie an enduring world symbol of the fight for human rights and creative freedom.

Everyone is invited to attend Salman Rushdie’s public lecture in the A&S Auditorium at 5 p.m. on September 25. You are also invited to his breakfast conversation session at the Albany County Public Library from 9-10.30 a.m. on September 26. Seats at the breakfast are limited so if you wish to reserve a free ticket, please call 307-721-2580, ext. 5456, or email albypr@will.state.wy.us

Eminent Writers

In 2007-08, we welcomed our first Eminent Writer in Residence, Terry Tempest Williams. In the Fall, Terry taught a creative non-fiction graduate course and held a series of workshops for the Laramie community. In the Spring, she and many of our grad students traveled the state for a series of “weather reports,” in which citizens of Pinedale, Riverton and the Wind River Reservation, Gillette, Casper and Cheyenne had the chance to tell their stories in the context of Wyoming’s energy boom. Terry was an enthusiastic and high-profile first Eminent Writer; I thank her for her service to English and to UW.

In 2008-09, the distinguished fiction writer Joy Williams will join us as our second Eminent Writer in Residence. Joy’s many career highlights include being a finalist for the National Book Award in fiction for her novel *State of Grace* and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *The Quick and the Dead*. Joy will teach courses in the Fall and the Spring and serve on graduate student thesis committees. We are thrilled to have this exciting writer on our faculty.
Visiting Writers

English had some truly important creative and scholarly figures in our midst in 2007-08. In March, we welcomed Michael Ondaatje, the Canadian writer whose novel The English Patient won the Booker Prize and became an Oscar-winning film. Ondaatje’s visit included a reading from his new novel, Divisadero; an on-stage interview with our own novelist, Alyson Hagy; a lunchtime question and answer session at the Albany County Public Library; and a symposium hosted by our co-sponsor, International Studies. In May, we enjoyed a visit from graphic novelist Art Spiegelman, whose pathbreaking book Maus, a tale of Holocaust survival across the generations, won the Pulitzer Prize. As part of our Visiting Eminent Writer search, we hosted readings and class sessions by fiction writers Sigrid Nunez (The Last of Her Kind), Dorothy Allison (Bastard Out of Carolina), and Richard Bausch (Someone to Watch Over Me: Stories). Directed by Craig Arnold, our Visiting Writers series also hosted language poet Lyn Hejinian and environmental writer Christopher Cokinos. Together with the MFA in Creative Writing, English sponsored the visit of miriam cooke, Professor of Asian and African Languages and Literature at Duke University, who spoke on the proliferation of writing by Arab women and its implications for global cultural change. (Yes, Professor cooke employs lower-case letters for her name).

I must note the generous co-sponsors who helped fund many of our visiting writer events: I thank the UW Foundation, the UW President’s Office, the Academic Affairs Office, the College of Arts and Sciences, the International Studies Program, the Wyoming Humanities Council, the Wyoming Arts Council, the Albany County Public Library, the Laramie Jewish Community Center, UW-Hillel, the UW Art Museum, ENR, the MFA Program in Creative Writing, and

Program Updates

After a 3-year term as the first director of our MFA in Creative Writing, Harvey Hix returns to regular faculty life. Harvey was a magnificent director of the MFA, leading the program with conviction and integrity. Thanks in large part to his efforts, this year’s entering class will be the first fully-funded cohort in program history. Replacing Harvey at the MFA’s helm will be Beth Loffreda, an award-winning teacher and scholar whose writing interests have recently drawn her to creative non-fiction. Beth is sure to be a superb advocate for the MFA – welcome aboard, Beth!

On the MA side, we have created a director’s position to ensure that the program is thoughtfully represented at the department table. The first director of the MA, Susan Aronstein, has just completed her first semester on the job. She is already working to redesign our MA web page and increase applications to the program. She is also planning an MA speakers series that will bring nationally-respected English scholars to UW in 2008-09. A leading teacher and scholar as well as a great administrator, Susan is uniquely qualified to take on this important role.

In the Composition program, our new colleague Mary Sheridan–Rabideau has just finished her first year as director. Mary truly hit the ground running when she arrived at UW – she consulted across campus with all the stakeholders involved in teaching writing, and she spearheaded a radical redesign of English 1010, Freshman Composition. The new course will hit the classroom in Fall 08 and will, we hope, better prepare our students to write across the disciplines at UW. You can follow developments in Composition when our new Composition website goes live this Fall.

In our main offices, Sandy Clark has just served her first term as Assistant Chair. Sandy does a great job advising and recruiting students. Her combination of friendliness, diplomacy, and experience makes her a perfect fit for the Assistant Chair’s office.
Faculty News and Notes

English faculty continued to be recognized for their teaching in 2007-08. Julianne Couch won an A&S award for Extraordinary Merit in Teaching; Peter Parolin was an A&S Top Ten Teacher and was recognized for excellence in teaching Freshman Honors; Susan Aronstein, Duncan Harris, Janice Harris, and Beth Loffreda were all Mortar Board Top Professors; the Department’s Fred Slater Award for excellence in lower-division teaching went to Jason Kirkmeyer and Michael Knievel.

On the research front, Craig Arnold and Caroline McCracken Flesher won A&S awards for Extraordinary Merit in Research. Craig also won a coveted Fulbright award which will take him to Colombia in Fall 08. Julianne Couch and Susan Frye both won A&S Basic Research Grants for their new projects: Julianne’s project is the Wyoming energy boom – she will write about the production of vital yet culturally-complicated forms of energy in the state; Susan’s project is a cultural analysis of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Creativity Conferences

In 2008-09, English will actively sponsor and participate in a series of conferences on creativity and the future of the humanities. This project will be framed by two conferences at UW: “Revisioning the Whole,” on interdisciplinary collaboration, takes place September 23-25, 2008, and “Teaching Creativity” takes place February 24-26, 2009. Both these conferences will feature UW speakers alongside leading scholars and performing artists from across the nation. We warmly invite everyone to attend.

News from our Grads

The faculty are also publishing books, articles, stories, poems and essays at an impressive rate. Titles that appeared over the past year include Julianne Couch’s Jukeboxes and Jackalopes: A Wyoming Bar Journey (Pronghorn Press, 2007); Robert Torry and Paul Flesher’s Film and Religion: An Introduction (Abingdon, 2007), based on their perennially popular UW course; Mary Sheridan-Rabideau’s Girls, Feminism, and Grassroots Literacies: Activism in the Girlzone (SUNY, 2008); Harvey Hix’s God Bless! (Etruscan, 2007), a sassy yet deeply thoughtful volume of poems and interviews on the presidency of George W. Bush; and David Romtvedt’s Wyoming Fence Lines (Wyoming Humanities Council, 2007). Our faculty have more great books in the pipeline, so be on the lookout for future newsletters.

Colin Keeney was UW’s first Academic Professional Lecturer to win a Seibold Award (thereby opening the door for future APLs to win): Colin’s Seibold project is the assessment of core writing courses at Wyoming Community Colleges and universities in the region. April Heaney, Rick Fisher, and Caroline McCracken Flesher all won UW’s prestigious Faculty Grant-in-Aid award. April and Rick’s project is to study at-risk students in their sophomore year to determine the factors that predict their successful progress toward graduation. Caroline’s project is to research a fascinating 19th-century case of body snatching and murder that continues to resonate in Scottish literature and culture. Caroline also won a UW Flittie grant and a Huntington Library–British Academy award to support her sabbatical research in 08-09.

Finally, congratulations to our colleague and former Wyoming Poet Laureate, Robert Roripaugh, who was selected for the A&S Outstanding Former Faculty Award in 2008.

Terrific Additions to our Staff

This year we gained two new staff members: Rachel Ferrell is the point person for the MFA and for the journal Eighteenth-Century Life, edited by Ric Reverand. Plum Schultz is our front-office assistant, the face of English to students across UW. Rachel and Plum are already integral members of a staff team that includes Keith Kanbe and Patty Romero, and we are glad to have them.
Giving to UW English: General Fund and the all-new Janice Harris Excellence Fund

All of us are grateful to the friends and alumni who generously donate to the Department. Just this year, your contributions enabled us to:

- send students to conferences in New York, Texas, and California;
- entice outstanding writer and scholars to campus; and
- offer scholarships that reward student excellence and create student opportunity.

We are especially delighted to announce that an anonymous donor has given $25,000.00 to create a Janice Harris Excellence Fund marking the retirement of one of our finest colleagues. The donor challenges the rest of us to add to the initial amount, thereby creating an endowment that will expand our students’ educational opportunities, helping them to attend second-language immersion programs, travel to academic conferences, or purchase special editions of texts crucial to their research. I ask for your assistance in making our goal a reality. Please contribute to the Janice Harris Excellence Fund to honor the career of this superb faculty member, who has made such a difference in the lives of so many students and colleagues. To those who have already donated in Janice’s honor, my sincere thanks.

If you would like to contribute to the Janice Harris Excellence Fund or to the General English Department Fund, please fill out and return the donor card on this newsletter.
Transitions

In 2007-08, we said goodbye to some of our most treasured colleagues. It is almost unbearably sad to lose colleagues who have given so much to the department, but it is also a chance to celebrate the impact these unforgettable faculty members have had.

In December, our wonderful Americanist colleague, Peter West, left us for a new job at Adelphi University. In his five years at UW, Pete was an outstanding teacher, a vital part of our intellectual life, and a great friend. We wish Pete, Laurel, and little Josie all the best for a great future in New York.

In May, Mark Booth retired after 22 years with the English department. He arrived in Hoyt Hall in 1986 to take the job of department chair. Under his leadership, the department flourished, hiring several of the faculty members who still make up our core. At UW, Mark also served as associate dean of Arts and Sciences, as the University Ombudsman, and as a generous colleague of great integrity. His research areas include 18th-century British literature as well as the popular culture of song; indeed, his book, The Experience of Songs, is a classic in the field. We wish Mark and his wife Cleta all the best and we thank them for all they have given our department.

In May, Lewis Dabney retired after 35 years with the English department. A scholar of American literature, Lewis’s first book was on William Faulkner: The Indians of Yoknapatawpha: A Study in Literature and History. For much of his career, Lewis has been the preeminent scholar on the work of Edmund Wilson, the American writer and literary critic. In 2006, Lewis published his crowning achievement, Edmund Wilson: A Life in Literature, which received prominent notices, including front-page coverage in The New York Times Book Review. Outside of the English Department, Lewis spent a year as director of UW’s American Heritage Center and he received fellowships from the National Humanities Institute, the National Humanities Center, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the New York Institute for the Humanities. We wish Lewis and his wife Sarah many happy years to come.

In May, Janice Harris retired after 38 years with the English Department. She came to UW with her husband Duncan in 1970, and together they have been the heart and soul of UW English. Janice’s first book was The Short Fiction of D.H. Lawrence; next came Edwardian Stories of Divorce; more recently, she researched South African women’s writing and Japanese literature and culture. As a teacher, Janice won all the UW awards and she made a difference, inspiring students to think big and to reach the heights. She inspired the rest of us as well, through her leadership: she was an associate dean of A&S; she helped build the Women’s Studies Program, which she also directed in the late 90s; she directed UW Honors in the mid-80s; and she was an outstanding chair of English from 2000-2003. Those of us who have worked with Janice owe her great professional and personal debts. Thank you, Janice, for everything.

New Faculty

I’ll tell you more about our new faculty in the Winter newsletter, but for now I’d like at least to introduce you to the three new colleagues who will join us in Fall 08: Kate Northrop is a distinguished poet (see her Things Are Disappearing Here, 2007) who comes to us from West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Kate joins us as an associate professor. Nicole Quackenbush comes to us fresh from her PhD program in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Arizona. One of Nicole’s first assignments will be to teach composition in UW’s Synergy program, which supports our conditionally-admitted students. Jason Thompson (who is married to Nicole) is also fresh from his Arizona PhD in Rhetoric and Composition; this Fall, Jason will teach an innovative course, “The Rhetoric of Video Games,” within the English major. A warm welcome to Kate, Nicole, and Jason.
Student Success

As always, we are very proud of the accomplishments of our students. Here is a partial list of their successes: Derrick Cohens, who graduated with an MA in May, won an Ellbogen Award for his outstanding teaching of English 1010. Derrick was also accepted for PhD study in English at Emory University with a full five-year fellowship. Megan Friesen, who graduates with an MA in August, has just taken a job teaching English at McCook Community College in Nebraska. In the MFA, Christina Ingoglia won a Cheney Study Abroad Grant from International Programs and a Haub Grant for Student Research and Creative Activities. Christina will use her funds to research the uranium industry in China. Meagan Ciesla and Emilene Ostlind won A&S Summer Independent Research Grants. Meagan’s grant will enable her to visit carnivals across the country as part of her thesis research for a collection of short stories. Emilene’s grant will support her research on the pronghorn migration in western Wyoming. Emilene also won the Boyd Evison Graduate Fellowship for study in Grand Teton National Park. Courtney Carlson received an Evrian Haub scholarship to participate in the Yellowstone Field Course, a 30-day summer course exploring the geological, ecological, and cultural dimensions of Yellowstone National Park. Marissa Johnson-Valenzuela won an International Travel Grant to go to Mexico to research the Zapatista movement for her fiction writing. Our undergraduates are equally impressive in their achievements: Ariel Calmes and Ann Stebner were chosen as A&S Top Twenty graduates; Ariel will be starting Law School at UW this Fall. In May, Shaleena Moy and Tim Raymond were given the first A&S Board of Visitors / English Department student service awards. Both Shaleena and Tim will enter excellent masters programs in English in the Fall. Gary Chaffee, another May graduate, will begin master’s work in Library Sciences this Fall in Kentucky.

Through the generosity of our donors, English offers many scholarships each year. Here is the list of our 2008 scholarship winners: Clough Scholarship: Courtney Carlson, Randy Koch, David Ludwin, and Rebecca Mueller; Wilson Scholarship: Jane Hawley and Dixie Thoman; Schwartzkopf Scholarship: Lisa Johnson and John Middleton; McIntyre Scholarship: Meagan Ciesla, Meaghan Elliott, Lillian Gilmer, Lindsey Grubbs, Christina Ingoglia, Emilene Ostlind, Eileen Pfefferle, and Deborah Sneed; Tanner Scholarship: Lauren Perry. Congratulations to all these great students!