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English Department Strikes Through the Competition

By Marjorie Cartwright and Max Fargo



*SJSU Faculty/Staff Summer League Championship Trophy
Photo by Max Fargo*

The clattering of bowling pins quieted in the SJSU Student Union Bowling Center as resident bowlers were blinded by matching, neon green and yellow shirts. The Strike Throughs, the English Department bowling team, certainly know how to make an entrance. The all-star team features Ryan “Interrobang” Skinnell as the muscle; Jennifer “Dr. J” Johnson as the specialist; Mark “Blatz” Thompson as the generalist; and Tom “Shoe Money” Moriarty as the veteran. They are the winners of the Summer Faculty Bowling League at SJSU and thus the current champions.

If you didn’t know about the bowling league, you aren’t alone. Larry Aldama, the manager of both the SJSU Bowling Center and the faculty league, said that the league was so popular when it opened that they had to stop advertising it just to keep up with the demand. Not that we can blame them; who wouldn’t want to submit a team and attempt to win a nice golden trophy?

While a competitive league might seem like it would cause a divide among teams competing for the trophy, it has actually brought faculty closer together. “We’ve worked with these people for years, but we never really knew them as a person from that department...it really helped us all connect to each other and put names to faces,” said Dr. Skinnell. “We don’t really have a rival team; actually, we have the opposite—we have teams that we get along with really well so we’re excited when we get to play with them.” (continued on page 2)





English Department Bowling Team
Photo by Max Fargo

Teams like The Strike Throughs typically come from the same department because the staff members know each other, making it easier to make groups. And always important are team names—usually with a funny pun associated with the department. This includes a variety of team names ranging from The Bowling Stones to the Pin Pals. Since the Strike Throughs already knew each other from the department, it made sense to sign up for the league. “We were already texting each other all the time,” Dr. Johnson stated, “So we already knew each other quite well...forming a bowling team just seemed natural.” But bowling teams don’t have to be from a specific department; a teacher from business can get together with someone from the mathematics department and two other faculty members to form a solid bowling team and compete in the league.

Competition can certainly be fun, but the reigning champions insist they don’t make their goal all about winning. They joined the league to bowl, have fun, and cheer on the other teams as they play. In fact, they didn’t expect to win at all. “At first, we thought it was a mistake,” Thompson recalls. “We were walking out of the bowling alley, looking over our shoulders, and wondering if they were going to take the trophy away from us, then Dr. Skinnell suggested we make a run for it.”

While the champions are humble in their victory, that doesn’t mean they are willing to let go of their title easily. With more teams signed up for the fall league than any other league before, The Strike Throughs face some stiff competition. “Now that we’re champions, I feel like we need to get a rival team. We’ll work on it, get some sports drama going, like the Giants and Dodgers,” Skinnell suggests jokingly.

If any faculty members are interested in joining, but concerned their bowling skills may be a bit lacking, don’t worry! Any faculty of any skill level can participate in the faculty bowling league. It is an excellent way to bond not only with other members of the English Department, but other faculty members that you work with here at

SJSU. If you’re interested, contact Larry Aldama to get all of the details. For all the students out there, while there may not be a student bowling league, we still encourage you to support your English faculty champions and check out the bowling center if you are interested in bowling.

Games happen every Friday at 12:00 PM (this includes league matches and practice matches), so if you’d like to watch and support the SJSU faculty (or get involved), go see The Strike Throughs for yourself and congratulate the champions!

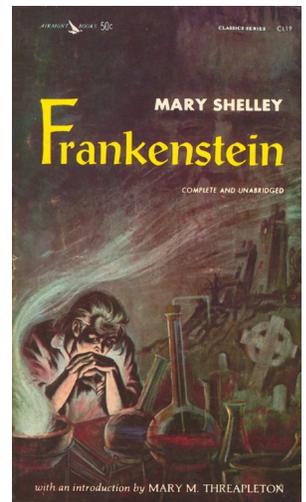
What a Time for Frankenstein: A Bicentennial Celebration

By Kylie Hinson and Jess Rebrukh

Some people have normal birthday celebrations, while others may even stretch their special day and celebrate it for the entire month. However, when an iconic green monster of the undead turns 200, a year-long celebration is called for! Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* reached its bicentennial mark early in 2018, and the festivities continued for the rest of the year. Many of SJSU’s STEM and Humanities and Arts departments hosted a slew of events, exposing the versatility of this exemplary novel. These events are influenced by the impact Mary Shelley’s extraordinary creation has on modern day technology, writing, and media.

Among the first events was a mock trial held in early April, coordinated by ENGL 10 students. They debated who should be held responsible for all the murders in the novel: the creator Victor Frankenstein or his vengeful creature? The trial was open to the public, and the audience had the opportunity to participate as the jury. The arguments were so heated, the classroom nearly caught fire! Things finally cooled down again as they came to a consensus and decided that because of Victor Frankenstein’s negligence, he should be held responsible for the murders. The jury declared Dr. Frankenstein guilty on all charges, and the creature was victorious.

Additionally, the College of Humanities and the Arts had a commanding presence in a project called “FrankenSTEM,” a series of roundtable discussions where the participants dissected the novel and raised a variety of different questions around topics that included artificial intelligence, the negative effects of modern-day



Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

technology, and homoerotic undertones. Students, many from the English department, also participated in a *Frankenstein* poster contest, which encouraged them to use the previously mentioned themes and apply their design prowess to create truly imaginative posters. All winners and participants can be found on the Frankenstein Bicentennial blog, which is located under “Department Community and Events” on the English department webpage.

More recently, a discussion was hosted at the Hammer Theatre which delved deeper into novel and movie adaptations of Shelley’s work. Associate Professor of English, Dr. Adrienne Eastwood, was one of three participants in the discussion. She recounted the event for us, discussing her presentation on homoerotic themes in *Frankenstein*. Eastwood also summarized the topics that her fellow presenters focused on and commented on the audience Q&A. Each of the three presenters took about ten minutes to speak about their topics.

Eastwood delved into the main points of her discussion, “Queering the Monster,” by explaining, “I wanted to look at the male relationships in the book because every significant relationship is male-male. I looked at young 28-year-old bachelors who don’t seem interested at all in the kinds of things that other 28-year-old young men might be interested, in like sex or marriage.” She also talked on the relationship between Frankenstein and his creation, stating, “I wanted to bring up this sense that I have that the creature represents some aspect of Victor’s personality or psyche that, for some reason, he can’t live with. It’s the sense that the creature represents something abnormal or something strange about Victor’s own personality. The connection in the novel between Victor and his creature is so tightly interwoven that I thought it was significant and suggestive of perhaps a homoerotic subtext.” Eastwood brought up some of the language Mary Shelley used as well, commenting on how she did some close reading for the audience of the monster’s creation scene and pointing to the odd eroticism the author was invoking.

Professor Eastwood touched on how much she enjoyed the three different viewpoints brought together in the discussion: “It was really neat to have these three different professors—who don’t really teach *Frankenstein*—



Dr. Adrienne Eastwood
Photo by Jesus Hernandez

talking about Frankenstein in three very different ways and coming to three very different conclusions inspired by the same text.” Eastwood deemed the evening to be very successful and informative, stating, “It’s a celebration of Mary Shelley’s achievement, and one that endures even to this day.”

The ability to reach across a wide range of disciplines and engage in insightful discussions, like Dr. Eastwood’s presentation, is what makes Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* so infinitely iconic. SJSU’s English department continues to showcase their critical abilities in exploring the novel. We look forward to wrapping up the celebration of Shelley’s 200-year-old masterpiece with more debates, discussions, and exemplary work put on by the students and faculty in the English and other SJSU departments.

From University Classrooms to Classrooms Behind Bars

By Jackeline Ruiz and Zainab Nisa

There is a low murmur in the classroom. Professor Nancy Stork holds out a workbook to her student, enunciating the syllables of each word. She encourages him to sound out each word, drawing out the vowels and hitting every consonant, guiding him through each step.



San Mateo County Jail
Photo by Sundt.com

After discussing the text, they go over spelling, comprehension, and pronunciation. It may seem like any other day in class, except she’s not at San José State University; she’s at the San Mateo County Jail.

Professor Stork is a well-known professor at the SJSU English Department. What many may not know is that she is also a tutor at the San Mateo County Jail. Her interests began a few years ago when her choir group attended the San Mateo Jail on Christmas Day to sing for the inmates.

She describes the compelling hold the jail had on her: “You know people say they were called to do something, and I never really understood what that was. But I have to say; I really felt like something was pulling me,

even against my better judgment.” Now, Professor Stork volunteers as a tutor through the literacy organization, Project Read.

Project Read is available at the San Mateo County Jail for the inmates that are a part of the Choices Program run by the Delancey Street Foundation. In-



*Professor Nancy Stork
Photo by Zainab Nisa*

mates who take place in the Choices Program commit to nonviolence, becoming clean, getting sober, and obtaining their GED. As a tutor, Professor Stork helps improve the inmates' literacy levels by teaching them reading, writing, and comprehension skills. Although the jail setting is entirely different from the SJSU

classrooms, she recounts when one of her inmate students practiced a craft she teaches: oral storytelling.

This particular student had a tattoo of the indigenous ruler Cuauhtémoc on one forearm, and the Virgin of Guadalupe on the other. When Professor Stork first saw his tattoos, she was intrigued and asked more about them. He told the legendary story of how Cuauhtémoc became a ruler. Professor Stork was in awe: “I said, ‘Wow, I’m getting an actual oral tradition, from this person who is telling it to me without a book.’” Indigenous history is not the only thing that the inmates have taught her.

Working with adult inmates has helped shed light on issues in literacy that Professor Stork was not aware of. The students struggled with basic tasks of reading, including comprehension, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Many inmates were forced to leave school at an early age for numerous reasons, such as family troubles, violence, and drugs. Because many of the inmates did not receive a solid education growing up, their literacy skills remained at an elementary level.

Though Professor Stork is well versed in literature and teaching, she faced some unforeseen challenges when she first arrived. Professor Stork wanted to expose her inmate students to rich literature, but she was shocked to see their reading levels. Professor Stork had to learn the different needs of these students, as they were not typical college students, but rather inmates who came from different backgrounds and levels of education. She describes the experience: “I had a bit of a savior complex. I think I thought I was going to go in and save them all; they were all going to get their GED and have a happy ending.” As Professor Stork later discovered, being a

tutor at the jail was about more than just lesson plans and literature.

As an experienced college professor, Professor Stork had rigid ideas of what great literature meant and how such writing helped advance the students: “I was a bit of a snob thinking, ‘I’ll bring them great literature, and this will help,’” she explains, “But they need the basic experience of enjoying what they read. I figured that out after about six months.” Professor Stork learned that it was not merely about exposing the inmates to good literature but about helping them enjoy the literature that they needed to escape their reality.



*San Mateo County Jail
Photo by Sundt.com*

Professor Stork strongly believes programs such as Choices help reduce recidivism, empowering inmates to prepare themselves for life beyond the jail, decreasing the chance of reoffending. After seeing the difficulties that the jail population faces, she believes proper education and literacy is a huge proponent in moving the inmates forward in society. Lack of secondary education can play a significant role in poverty, violence, and other pressing social, financial, and health issues. Adult literacy is crucial to having a functional society.

Programs such as Project Read and Choices help encourage inmates to pick up where they left off, build their education from the ground up, and help the inmates move forward in life. Professor Stork plans on volunteering for as long as she can at the San Mateo County Jail. She commends the program, calling it a rewarding experience where participants can see firsthand the impact the programs have on the inmates.

If you’re interested in volunteering at Project Read, please check out this link:

<https://www.projectreadredwoodcity.org/volunteer>

Award-Winning Author Joins Faculty at SJSU

By Matthew Lopez and Marlene Schultz

Dr. Keenan Norris brings years of rewarding teaching and writing experience as he joins the Department of English and Comparative Literature at SJSU as Assistant Professor in Creative Writing and Director of *Reed Magazine*. Prior to starting at SJSU, Dr. Norris lectured at ten different community colleges, published two books, and won the 2012 James D. Houston Award from Heyday Books for his novel *Brother and the Dancer*. His writing has appeared in many online and print publications, and he currently serves as a guest editor for the Oxford African American Studies Center.

Dr. Norris earned a Master of Fine Arts in English and Creative Writing from Mills College in 2005. He then went on to earn a PhD from University of California Riverside, where his studies explored the historical and current relationship between African American writers and the publishing industry, with a special focus on the re-emergence of street lit as a sub-genre. Just a few months after he finished his dissertation, Dr. Norris edited and published *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape*, an anthology based on major themes from his dissertation.

From 2005 to 2009, Dr. Norris taught as an adjunct teacher at a variety of community colleges. "I would teach, sometimes in the same day, in the North Bay, the East Bay, and the South Bay. Morning, noon, night, and then come back home," he recalls. He then went on to be a full-time professor at Evergreen Valley College for nine years. After balancing hundreds of students, Dr. Norris comes to SJSU with a strong work ethic and the ability to accomplish many tasks at once. He is happy to settle down as a professor where his work is fixed at one location, but his past experiences have prepared him for his current work in the Department of English and Comparative Literature.

Working at SJSU has been a positive and enriching experience for Dr. Norris, and the work at the English department has been intellectually fulfilling. He has been able to devote more time to research, editing, and writing in addition to his classes. In his first semester



Dr. Keenan Norris
Photo by Akubundu Amazu-Lott

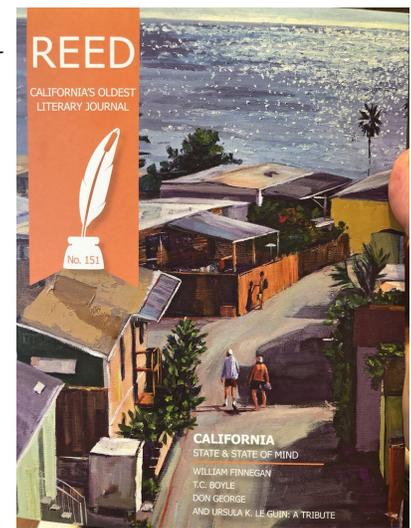
at SJSU, Dr. Norris taught Reed Magazine (ENGL 133) and the Fiction Writing Workshop for graduate students (ENGL 241). The Center for Literary Arts and *Reed Magazine* had a successful launch party in the fall semester for the 151st edition, and it was a highlight for Dr. Norris and his team at *Reed*. "From the *Reed* contest winners reading from their work, to T.C. Boyle's spellbinding performance, the event more than lived up to its billing," Dr. Norris says, feeling honored to have been part of it.

His work continues with *Reed Magazine* where he will guide the publication of the 152nd edition in Spring 2019. Dr. Norris happily accepted the position of director and editor-in-chief for *Reed Magazine* to orient himself in the English department and at SJSU by working within the university on a deeper level. *Reed* has connected

Dr. Norris with donors, publishing companies, and administrators. In turn, he says that working in *Reed* has taught him an administrative skill set different from writing and teaching. Unlike any previous teaching position he has held, Dr. Norris helps all the logistics and operations of *Reed* to run smoothly and efficiently, maintaining the prestigious reputation of the oldest literary journal in California.

Dr. Norris is drawn to creating subject matter for his writing from evocation of ideas and emotional touchstones. "Eventually," he says, "those ideas may become a book, story, or just a journal entry for the day." Although not initially a creative writing major when starting college at UC Riverside, Dr. Norris was mentored by Susan Straight, a professor of creative writing and National Book Award finalist. She worked with him on his writing, teaching him to "focus line-by-line... and not get caught up by the trajectory of the story." From this, Dr. Norris says he can use every word in a meaningful way, working within the rhythm of sentences. "I don't think of it as inspiration, it's what I do," he says thoughtfully.

Looking to his future at SJSU, Dr. Norris is excited to teach creative writing and American literature to both undergraduates and graduate students, as well as an upcoming street lit class in the 2019/20 school year. Beyond the classroom, Dr. Norris looks forward to



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attending some speaker events at SJSU and the Center for Literary Arts, as well as engaging with other writers throughout the department. He praises the university as “a dynamic teaching institution that is bolstering its ties to the community as well as making an impact in the arts and STEM.”

We know that Dr. Keenan Norris will bring his teaching experience, vast knowledge of writing, and dedicated research skills to all facets of the university, and we are proud to welcome him to the English department.

Aspiring Authors Unite at the Poets & Writers Coalition

By Ariele Silvas and Joanna Prabhu

On a typical Wednesday evening, the Poets & Writers Coalition (PWC) members pile into the English department’s conference room with the smell of aged textbooks welcoming them in. Club members laugh and chat about their classes until Club President Gabrielle LaFrank quiets the room and begins the meeting. She starts by reporting on recent successful club events, such as open mics and informational booths, and after these announcements LaFrank presents a writing exercise which members immediately start working on. Suddenly, the room goes quiet as students focus on scribbling down their ideas, and stories begin to blossom from this inspiration. Moments like these perfectly capture the phenomenal writing environment of the PWC.



PWC Meeting

The coalition was founded approximately ten years ago by then-SJSU student Rachele Escamilla and was sponsored by Professor Alan Soldofsky. The PWC began from the notion that writers needed a space to practice and explore their creative work. Since then, the coalition has strived towards their motto of creating “an environment for artistic exploration” by welcoming SJSU students from all majors and any writing proficiency level to join and take part in the creative writing experience. Although the current 30+ members of the PWC vary in preferred writing styles, methods, and genres, all are united in their love for writing.

Members come to the meetings to strengthen their writing skills through exercises and workshopping, which gives them the opportunity to receive feedback from their more experienced writing peers. “Being among other writers is like having a toolbox—there’s so many things at your disposal,” says President LaFrank. LaFrank has noticed that members often inspire each other to try new forms of writing, leading to limitless exploration in their creativity. Surrounded by a group of trusted peers, writers can feel comfortable to experiment with their writing and test their artistic ability.

This environment has also fostered the creativity of successful alumni, such as the coalition’s founder, Rachele Escamilla, and the former PWC president, Brandon Luu. Escamilla is a prominent writer and prize-winning poet. Her first book of poetry *Imaginary Animal* won the 2014 Grand Prize for Poetry in the Willow Books Literature Awards, and her poems have been recorded for the Library of Congress archive. Luu is a current SJSU MFA student and has gained momentum as a local poet, earning a spot as a featured reader at Chopsticks Alley, a gallery in San José’s Japantown. During his time in the PWC, Luu participated in significant networking opportunities with influential Bay Area writers, such as Mighty Mike McGee, the Santa Clara County Poet Laureate.

To foster growth and encourage the budding writers in the club, the PWC gives members the opportunities to share their work at campus and San José events. The coalition often attends the MOSAIC and Café Francati open mics, where members can perform their poems and spoken word. LaFrank notices that the act of going as a group motivates students to have more confidence in their writing: “[Y]our performance suddenly feels bigger than itself. When you go up on the stage, you know there’s someone listening to you.” Additionally, the coalition partners with the Center for Literary Arts to host the Legacy of Poetry Festival. This notable event attracts many poets to downtown San José to attend workshops, panels, and readings. This past spring, the coalition successfully hosted its own poetry slam during the Legacy of Poetry celebration.



PWC at an Open Mic

The unity of the PWC members is what makes the coalition so successful. President LaFrank facilitates a space of both craft and friendship. “The PWC is my second family on campus,” LaFrank says. “I’ve been here since my freshman year, and it’s never gotten old.” All the events and meetings are grounded by this atmosphere of supportive camaraderie for each other, which in turn creates the perfect environment for student writers to feel safe and comfortable to practice their work. LaFrank extends the invitation to join the PWC to all SJSU students looking for a space to explore their writing: “This coalition is here for you and your writing.”

For more information about the club, follow the Poets & Writers Coalition on Facebook at Poets and Writers Coalition @ San José State University, and @pwcsjsu on Instagram.

Getting to Know Steinbeck Fellows Jill Logan and Kirin Khan

By Sierra Patino and Sara De La O

Many colleges offer writing programs, but often times, only students and teachers can apply. The Steinbeck Fellowship Program is a different matter. Thanks to the generosity of Martha Heasley Cox, this program selects a handful of writers to endorse each year. The Steinbeck Fellowship Program aims to give writers the resources necessary for them to thrive and gain more publicity.

With a stipend of \$15,000, the Steinbeck Fellows are instructed to do one thing: write. Over the course of a school year, the fellows must work on a written project. The project must either be a creative project (excluding poetry) or a work in Steinbeck Studies. The best part about the fellowship is everyone is encouraged to apply, regardless of age, education, familial status, and work conditions.

The Steinbeck Fellowship Program is even open to the staff here at San José State University. This year, two of the Steinbeck Fellows are lecturers in the Department of English and Comparative Literature: Jill Logan and Christine Vines. The four other Steinbeck Fellows are Katie M. Flynn, Laura Goode, Meng Jin, and Kirin Khan.

To get a varied perspective on being a Steinbeck Fellow, we spoke to Jill Logan, a professor, and Kirin Khan, a YouGov employee.

For Logan, it seemed like it was fated for her to become a Steinbeck Fellow. “Funny enough,” she says, “I had applied as an adjunct at San José State, not realizing the Steinbeck Center was there... I think I was just in the hall one day when I saw a sign and finally made the

connection.”

Logan lived in Iowa, but she decided to exchange the cold winters for California’s sunny beaches. More often than not, she finds herself writing about her home state of Oklahoma, even though she’s lived in about ten states. Her current novel for the fellowship, *The Frackling*, takes place in Oklahoma during the 1930’s.

Managing time is a difficult task for any writer, and for Logan, it’s no different. “I also have a 1-year-old,” she says, “That makes it very busy. This semester, I’m teaching three classes, so I get in one hour of writing time a day.” She looks forward to the spring semester when she will only have two classes, leaving her more time to focus on writing. She aims to finish her book by next spring.

Logan also gave some advice for applying to the fellowship. She says, “Write. Write. Write.” Writing is the only thing that will complete a writing project. It also helps to be prepared when applying. “When I applied for this, I had a pretty solid draft already,” she recounts. “It really helps when you can show you’ve got focus, and you already know the direction that something is going.”



Jill Logan
Photo by Zainab Nisa



Kirin Khan
Photo by Sam Luks

Some of the Steinbeck Fellows, like Jill Logan, have received some formal training in creative writing. However, the program does not exclusively look for people who have such a background. Some of the fellows are like Kirin Khan, who doesn’t have a degree in English.

Khan currently lives in Oakland with her partner and works a 9-5 job. Though Khan does not hold an English degree, she is active in her local writing community, through which she learned about the Steinbeck Fellowship. She has also had the opportunity to meet past fellows. She recalls one meeting in San Francisco: “I did a reading through the Hazel Reading Series...and I think one of the women I read with was a previous Steinbeck Fellow. So, the fellows are around, and they’re at literary events.”

Although the program website asks that the Steinbeck Fellows live in the San José Area, they do not require it. This is one advantage that the Fellowship Program offers for people like Khan. As long as the fellows can come to campus when requested, they can

live wherever they wish. Khan explains how, “A friend of a friend actually did the fellowship while living in L.A. and just flew out when needed.” This flexibility on living arrangements makes it easier for the fellows to focus on their writing, as they aren’t required to do “extra labor” as some other fellowships do. “They’ve made it really clear that they want us to spend our time writing,” says Khan.

The novel she’s working on for the fellowship is titled *Bludgeoned*. It focuses on professional fighting and domestic violence in a queer relationship. In addition to this novel, she also writes short stories. One in particular will be published next month in *Foglifter*, a San Francisco-based journal.

On the topic of time management, Khan states, “Everyone has their own time limitations. I can work 9-5 and be like ‘oh it’s really hard to find the time’... there’s always people who have made it happen with fewer resources, and I think that is a good kick in the pants to me when I feel like complaining about it.” Due to her job, Khan is only able to write on the weekends, but she makes up for time lost during the week by using a note-taking app. When inspiration hits her, she types a quick note and reviews what she’s saved over the weekend.

Her advice to those looking to join the Fellowship program is to just apply. “People get so afraid of rejection or get so precious about their work, they don’t want to put it out there,” she says. “A rejection isn’t a no; it’s just a not yet.”

The Steinbeck Fellowship Program encourages everyone to apply. However, only a lucky few are selected each year. The program is already accepting applications from now until January 2nd. The selected fellows will be notified in April 2019. The application must include a proposal for a planned work, a resumé, three letters of recommendation, and a writing sample of no more than 25 pages. With hard work and perseverance, everyone has an equal opportunity to become a fellow. Who knows who the next ones will be? There’s a chance you can become a Steinbeck Fellow today!

Dr. Skinnell Sheds Light on Trump’s Rhetoric

By Juanita Meeks and Francisco Garduno

Donald Trump. A name that elicits an array of emotions, as polarizing a political figure as they come. Trump’s lack of filter and refusal to conform to social norms helped get him elected. Whether Trump knows what the word “rhetoric” means or not, he has a way with words. He knows how to use them to impassion his base and his opponents.

Dr. Ryan Skinnell, a researcher and professor of

Rhetoric and Composition here at San José State, has been especially fascinated by Trump’s rhetoric. From the President’s meteoric rise as a populist candidate to present day, Dr. Skinnell has chronicled and analyzed what Trump has had to say and how he says it. “Regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum,” Dr. Skinnell says, “you cannot deny that the man has changed American politics fundamentally.”

Dr. Skinnell has recently collaborated on and edited *Faking the News: What Rhetoric Can Teach Us About Donald J. Trump* (2018). The book features work from eleven rhetoric scholars with their own take on what made Trump’s rhetoric so compelling and what that has to do with the political climate we now find ourselves in. Dr. Skinnell believes one of the biggest misconceptions about rhetoric is that it is primarily used to deceive people. “It is actually a form of art,” he says, “the ultimate art of persuasion.”

Dr. Skinnell has recently begun giving lectures on Trump’s rhetoric, travelling around the Bay Area to engage in political discussions. He’s given approximately 10 of these lectures, ranging from 20 people at a home in Naglee Park to 200 people at Cal State Northridge. Dr. Skinnell’s talks have attracted a wide assortment of people, including undergraduates, graduates, professors, and members of the general public. One notable commonality is his goal to not come off as preachy or to demonize anyone: “My goal is not to convert people. Or to hate Trump. I’m way more interested in how he works.” Dr. Skinnell firmly believes voting for Trump is not an automatic mark against someone’s intelligence. He instead focuses on rhetorical methods, a notable example being Trump’s effective use of his “Make America Great Again” hats. They are a form of identification, easy to recognize and bond with fellow supporters who share similar views.



MAGA Hat

Photo by Jae C. Hong / AP Images

A point of contention in the political sphere has been the role of mass media in regurgitating Trump’s talking points and agenda. So while it might be easy to blame right-leaning news agencies for the spread of Trump’s rhetoric, it goes beyond vilifying specific organizations, such as *Fox News*. Dr. Skinnell says, “The coun-

try in general, and maybe the world, is really polarized in our media consumption. Most people tend to get news that reinforces what they already believe.”

Dr. Skinnell doesn't really have a solution for stopping the spread of fake news. The best thing he urges us to do is to not get caught up in an “us vs. them” mentality because it “undermines the processes and the institutions of democracies, and they become flexible in ways that have really negative consequences for everybody.”

When asked what disgruntled, discouraged SJSU students could do to become more involved, he shared simple, yet effective advice: “Vote. Vote! I've talked to a lot of students, and half of them inform me that they aren't registered to vote. 'I'm still young, this doesn't affect me.' And that attitude is just flat-out wrong.”

One side effect of Trump's election has been the reaction from students. Dr. Skinnell explains, “Students are far more interested in political science than previous years. However, on the flip side, people are also more tired and depressed about it all.” Dr. Skinnell's advice for students who may be growing weary of the political climate, but would still like to stay involved, is to try starting at the local level of politics. They can be less toxic and more rewarding than the national stage.

He stresses that staying informed and involved is paramount. “Even if it's nothing more than just sitting down and dedicating time to actually reading up on the campaigns that you're voting for, it makes a difference. If we want democracy, it does require people to actively participate. And not just every four years, or when a sexy topic like weed pops up.”

For those interested in doing more than just voting, here are possible places you can invest your time:

- Visit sanjoseca.gov to see who your elected officials are, information about propositions, when town hall meetings take place and so much more.
- Join or volunteer for the League of Women Voters of San José—a group of women looking to educate the masses about politics.
- United Way Bay Area is an organization that works together with the community to make the Bay Area the best it can be.



Dr. Ryan Skinnell

Nayomi Munaweera: Our 2019 Lurie Chair

By Fatima Tayyab and Iris Yu

San José State University's Department of



Professor Nayomi Munaweera
Photo by Nathaneal F. Trimboli

English and Comparative Literature welcomes Nayomi Munaweera as the 2019 Lurie Chair, SJSU's author-in-residence program. Munaweera will be taking on the “Visiting Author/Scholar” title, which is a teaching professorship where the chosen author will teach one or two semesters at SJSU and make public appear-

ances at events. We look forward to what Lurie Professor Munaweera will bring to the campus.

Nayomi Munaweera comes from a diverse and multicultural background. She was born in Sri Lanka, raised in Nigeria, and immigrated to California with her family at the age of twelve. Munaweera is an alumnus of the Voices of Our Ancestors Writing Workshop (VONA) and the Squaw Valley Community of Writers. She has also been featured in *Vogue India* and is one of KQED's “Women to Watch.” Munaweera first started writing when she was sixteen years old; she received a datebook from her father, which she began to use as a personal journal. In 2001, Munaweera dropped out of the UC Riverside doctoral program in the middle of writing her dissertation to pursue her passion. She says, “After a lot of soul-searching—and making my family very upset—I dropped out of my program. I moved to Berkeley, lived in a house full of undergraduates, slept on a mattress on the floor, and got a job teaching at Ohlone College.”

For five years, Munaweera spent almost every day working on what would eventually become her first novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, which follows two Sri Lankan families living through the brutal Sri Lankan Civil War that Munaweera's extended family experienced. Like many authors, finishing the novel was only the tip of the iceberg. Munaweera needed her book published. Her novel was rejected by all the American houses, and even her agent stopped returning her phone calls. She states, “It was hugely demoralizing, but I also knew this was how writing would go: a ton of rejection, the absolute necessity of a thick skin.”

In 2011, Munaweera's friend recommended that she try a Sri Lankan publishing house, and they wanted her book. She recalls, “This was a hugely gratifying

moment because I had been grappling with what it meant to write about a war I did not live through.” In 2012, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* became published in Sri Lanka. After winning countless international awards, Munaweera’s novel drew the attention of all the American houses that once rejected her manuscript. Soon, they were in the midst of a bidding war for her book. She ended up going with St. Martin’s Press, which also published her 2016 novel *What Lies Between Us*.

Both *What Lies Between Us* and *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* reflect on how strongly Munaweera’s ties are to her Sri Lankan roots. Alongside Sri Lankan writer Shyam Selvadurai, Munaweera worked in the Write to Reconcile program from 2012-2015 in Sri Lanka. Together, they went into former war zones interviewing survivors, gathering young writers from both sides of the civil war, and teaching them creative writing skills. The project was both significant and emotionally powerful to Munaweera because she witnessed firsthand exactly what happened to her home country after all those years spent in war. Munaweera says, “I was granted the absolute privilege of working with talented students who otherwise would have zero access to creative writing teachers; there are no creative writing programs in the Sri Lankan universities.” According to Munaweera, it was also an honor to work with Selvadurai because he was the first Sri Lankan writer she ever read and working with him showed her that Sri Lankans were writing and widely read.



Professor Nayomi Munaweera
Photo by Travis Jensen

When discussing what it means to be a writer, Munaweera says, “Everything about a writer’s life affects their work. I take memory, dream, research, ideas, and I put them into a blender. I push the purée button, and what comes out after several painstaking years is the book.” Her process of writing differs depending on which section of a book she is developing.

On a typical weekday, one can find Munaweera sitting in the Hawk and Pony Café in Oakland, working on her latest piece. “The baristas know my order. I put in

earplugs and listen to music while I write. For this book, I can only listen to the *Twin Peaks* soundtrack, which is eerie and unsettling but beautiful, the exact emotional resonance I’m trying to capture in the work.” She writes for as long as she can, immersing herself into her work all while holding off our mundane world and its “demands and desires.” According to Munaweera, the role of a writer has always been to question and interrogate systems of power, race, and gender. Through her writing, she hopes to, “take on the monolith of America and expose its fallacies, its lies, and the machinery of its cruelty as an act of love.”

Munaweera’s journey has now brought her to San José State University. Munaweera is extremely thrilled and honored that she has been selected to serve as the Lurie Chair of 2019. She says, “The list of past Lurie Fellows is dauntingly stellar, and I hope I live up to their fantastic legacy.” Munaweera will also be instructing a class in Spring 2019 here at SJSU and has some positive additions she would like to bring to the curriculum. She hopes, “to make reading diverse, surrealist, revolutionary, and ubiquitous on every level.” Munaweera’s addition to SJSU as the 2019 Lurie Chair will help propel that change into a closer reality.

Executing Beta: Writers Who Code

By Fabian Vasquez and Jimmy Vo

Writers Who Code is a new group on campus that is committed to teaching students coding skills that could lead to new career opportunities, especially here in Silicon Valley. The group urges writers to come take the next step and connect with other techies at San José State University. At Writers Who Code, writers have the opportunity to get advice from others and find new coding opportunities. If writers have no experience with coding, Writers Who Code will help them learn.

After interning at Google in the summer of 2018, Ally Sassman, a Professional and Technical Writing student, launched Writers Who Code at San José State University to close the experience gap faced by promising Spartan writers. The organization, which draws inspiration from Google’s division of technical writers, focuses on creating coding-based projects that teach members the basic coding skills present in professional environments. While Writers Who Code primarily assists English majors, the organization is open to all SJSU Spartans.

There are many negative stigmas attached with learning to code: it’s too hard, it’s too challenging, it’s difficult to do alone. “Our goal was to alleviate the fear of coding,” co-founder Roy Thompson explains. “We wanted to create a friendly environment where everyone could

make mistakes together.” Through experiential learning, Sassman and Thompson hope to introduce the fundamental skills desired by many technical professions.



Roy Thompson and Ally Sassman
Photo by Zainab Nisa

Students are welcome to join this club where they can learn coding principles through fun and accessible means. The organization is structured to accommodate members of all skill levels, and its modular system allows members to drop in and out of sessions or projects easily. Members with prior coding knowledge can begin semester-long projects or assist in teaching newer members basic coding principles. They explain the primary elements of code with interactive games like CodeCombat or Swift.

The organization also wants to prepare members for jobs after graduation by emulating a friendly work environment. Members learn to delegate tasks, work together towards common goals, and solve challenges together. Each semester bears a new project to tackle. This past semester, Writers Who Code focused on developing an iOS app using Apple’s Swift program.

While many may wonder why coding skills are important for English majors, Thompson and Sassman insist, “[They’re] not aiming to be engineers...Instead, we want the underlying knowledge of working concepts to supplement our job.” It’s no accident that different coding methods are called languages. As technical writers, it’s essential to learn to speak the language of engineers. However, the benefits of coding do not stop at technical writers. Teachers with a coding background might use logic-based reasoning to teach their class. They also might utilize code to facilitate team-building exercises. Creative writers might need coding when creating digital content. Likewise, graphic designers will benefit from having fundamental coding skills when creating or editing web pages.

Writers Who Code is only in its beginning stages. Thompson and Sassman plan on establishing systems to leave a legacy that continues to develop over the next few

semesters. Their first steps include becoming a Recognized Student Organization (RSO) and setting timelines for subsequent projects. After Writers Who Code becomes registered with the help of Dr. Mark Thompson—the undergraduate director of professional and technical writing—the organization will receive funding and support from SJSU. Thompson and Sassman hope to use the funding to supplement online coding costs and invite guest speakers.

To learn more about Writers Who Code and opportunities to work on upcoming projects, look out for more information in the following semester.

A New Dr. J in Town!

By Erika Craddock and Trinh Vo

This fall, we are welcoming our new faculty member Dr. Allison Johnson to San José State University! Dr. Johnson’s area of expertise is 19th century American Literature. She teaches courses in American and transatlantic literature. She hails from Southern California and received her BA in English and History from UC Riverside. Both her MA and PhD are from UCLA.

We got a chance to meet with Dr. Johnson, hoping to see how she is acclimating to the new environment. While she misses home, she is enjoying her time here in the South Bay. She notes that it’s very different here in SJSU than at UC Santa Barbara, where she had been teaching previously.



Dr. Allison Johnson
Photo by Trinh Vo

UCSB is very out of the way from the city while SJSU is right in the heart of downtown, so there’s a lot more action here. Having spent two years teaching at UCSB, Dr. Johnson pointed out how the student lifestyle down there contrasted with SJSU. “I get a feeling that my students are commuting a lot more and not living in walking or biking distance from campus, which is how most of my students in Santa Barbara lived,” she says. Between working at a UC and CSU, Dr. Johnson noted the biggest difference between the two are the quarter and semester systems. “I’m still figuring out the timing slightly,” she remarks, and notes how she has to pick and choose what projects to assign with the time she is given.

As a SoCal native, Dr. Johnson is still adjusting to the NorCal way of life but is excited to explore her

new surroundings (though she insists she will never say “hella”). SJSU appealed to her as California’s first public university and as a campus that fosters both research and teaching excellence. Having attended California public schools her entire life, she is happy to have found a home and a tenure-track position in a dynamic, innovative, and community-oriented environment.

Dr. Johnson is a fourth-generation educator: both her parents taught, and it was only natural for her to continue the tradition. Her father’s academic career was her driving force in choosing to pursue teaching in a university setting. She always knew that she wanted to teach, so when choosing a major, she had a choice to make between literature and history—she chose both, loving to look at literature in its historical context and research the topics that interested her.

Amongst the various topics that Dr. Johnson is researching, she talks about soldiers who lost their right hands in the Civil War and had to learn how to use their left hands to perform daily tasks. They participated in a penmanship contest that sought to prove that, even without their right hands, these men could still contribute. She first became interested in the topic of amputation when watching the beginning of *Dances With Wolves*, in which Kevin Costner’s character “essentially chose suicide over losing his leg,” she mentions. She wanted to know what would make anyone that fearful of becoming an amputee. She wrote her dissertation on this topic and her book, *The Scars We Carve: Disruptive Bodies in Civil War Print Culture*, which comes out this April, elaborates on what she has learned from her research.

Looking back at her career, one of Dr. Johnson’s favorite teaching experiences was her involvement with UCLA’s Freshman Summer Program through the Academic Advancement Program. She was a part of that program for seven years; every summer, for six weeks before school started, she taught around 25 freshmen students, many of them first-generation college students. Her students would also take a couple of GE classes to establish their GPA in addition to taking her composition class and living on campus. Dr. Johnson would hold her office hours in the dorms and because she saw them every day for six weeks, she became well-acquainted with her students. “They were my best and brightest students,” she joyfully recalls. From this experience, Dr. Johnson enjoys spending an extended amount of time with students with a focus on building community and establishing a support system. As she adjusts to life at San José State, Dr. Johnson hopes to find similar programs that are offered here and would like to be more involved on campus.

Dr. Johnson made the huge leap of coming up

to the Bay Area from Southern California to pursue her academic career. She has put in a monumental amount of dedication and work to get to where she is. Despite her own workload, Dr. Johnson has a strong compassion for her students and takes the extra mile for them through her enthusiasm in teaching. With her bright personality and motivation, Dr. Johnson is a wonderful addition to SJSU that will further cultivate an enjoyable learning environment!

Immersing Yourself in Fine Arts: MFA Creative Writing Week at SJSU

By Ayhan Erman and Haylee Anderson



MFA Creative Writing Week

In November, San José State University held its third annual MFA Creative Writing Week. The event featured four workshops that focused on poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and composition studies. The workshops allowed SJSU students as well as the general public to attend the events with an RSVP to the Department of English and Comparative Literature. Prospective MFA applicants—as well as anyone with an interest in creative writing—were strongly urged to attend and be immersed in the literary community on campus. SJSU has a growing literary community, and the MFA Creative Writing Week showcased many of the creative minds who are currently enrolled in or teaching in the MFA program.

MFA Creative Writing Week 2018 opened the doors to the following graduate classes: Poetry Workshop with Alan Soldofsky, Nonfiction Workshop with Susan Shillinglaw, Fiction Workshop with Keenan Norris, and Composition Studies Seminar with Ryan Skinnell. Each workshop was conducted during a current graduate class to give those who participated in the workshops a chance to observe and participate in an actual MFA course while being immersed in the diverse literary community of SJSU.

The weeklong event also hosted three additional public events on or around campus. The three events were as follows: “An Evening with Tommy Orange,” presented by SJSU Student Involvement; a performance by Santa Clara County Poet Laureate Mighty Mike McGee with Tshaka Campbell at Café Stritch, presented by The Center for Literary Arts; and a Brown Bag Luncheon

Series with Ryan Skinnell, presented by the Poets and Writers Coalition. These events brought in students, faculty, and the general public alike.

The event also brought awareness to SJSU's dual-genre MFA program by giving those in the Bay Area a chance to see and experience what an actual MFA course entails, especially in terms of the atmosphere and tone of teaching that SJSU has. SJSU's dual-genre MFA program currently offers degrees in Creative Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, and Scriptwriting. MFA Creative Writing Week gave prospective applicants the opportunity to get familiar with the courses offered, the MFA faculty, and the literary community on campus.

MFA program director Dr. Soldofsky says, "[Creative writing] is probably the most vital form of communication in the arts, directly because it's in the language—it's not in images—that our culture has created." Dr. Soldofsky has been active in the Bay Area poetry community since 1973, a fact evidenced by his bookshelf, overflowing with an incredible amount of books and poetry. SJSU's Creative Writing Week brings in this work with language, including workshops in poetry, fiction/nonfiction, and even writing studies, to show that creative writing is more than just art. Even the public event, with Santa Clara County Poet Laureate Mighty Mike McGee, encompassed what Dr. Soldofsky said about poetry and poets: "[We] have always been at the vanguard of social and political change." The MFA program at SJSU works hard to engage its students in a wide variety of studies, including the addition of a new graduate course, English 250: Composition/Pedagogy Seminar, coming in Spring of 2019. The literary community at SJSU has grown from all the events and publicity, and it has seen an increase in writers and poets, especially with all the current events going on in the world. Thinking about the current events in the world can make anyone feel overwhelmed, but somehow the books and papers—the language documented all around in Dr. Soldofsky's office—assuages those fears.

Dr. Soldofsky discussed Greek, Roman, and Chinese cultures, and the topic of creativity and arts seemed to finally come together in one place: the United States. Dr. Soldofsky described the intimate aspects that writers have with their environment in creative writing, especially when writers write about things that are not so personal. He believes that there are more serious writers and poets in America now than there has ever been in any time, in any world civilization. As a country built off the melting pot of cultures and values, immigrants always came with an outside vision. The impact they have on this country and the difference in how they see things are im-



*Professor Alan Soldofsky
Photo by Geoffrey Smith II*

portant, and ultimately could be "evolutionary in terms of how the movement of the art grows and moves forward."

Dr. Soldofsky believes that American poetry is going through an "extraordinary and blossoming renaissance because of all these voices that have infused our tradition." The voice of creative writing in America is more important now than ever. Looking at a civilization's art, both literary and non-literary, from different periods of time, Dr. Soldofsky has identified a civilization's standard of living: "The arts were, in some ways, especially the literary arts, a kind of benchmark for the degree to which that culture has evolved and succeeded as a form of civilization." Cultural change has, and will always be, a part of the rapidly growing Silicon Valley. The literary community in SJSU plans to be a part of that cultural change.

Pursuing an MFA and/or PhD in creative writing has become more popular for creative writers because of the increase of published poets and writers who have obtained MFAs and PhDs. Nestled in the Bay Area rich with literary history, San José State University is a great option for those looking to pursue an MFA program. SJSU's MFA Creative Writing Week 2018 has left many attendees interested in the program. For those interested in the program, MFA applications for Fall 2019 are open from November 1, 2018 to March 1, 2019. Contact the MFA program director, Alan Soldofsky at alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu for more information.

Online Tutoring: A New Writing Center Resource

By Ally Sassman

The Writing Center, a long-established campus resource, has been expanding and evolving in recent years to fit the needs to the 30,000+ students attending every year. While traditional face-to-face tutoring is what most students are familiar with, the Center has recently released a brand-new alternative: online tutoring.

Online tutoring for a college writing center is not a new concept, but it requires lots of planning and training for both the staff and tutors. Maria Judnick, the Writing Center's Coordinator of Digital Initiatives, manages the center's social media, online projects, and blog. Now she's leading the online tutoring platform and providing primary tech support. In Summer 2017, Judnick started researching other universities' guidelines, tools, and best practices to see what online tutoring could look like for SJSU. After conducting 19 separate tests, the staff decided Zoom was to be the official technology platform, beating out options like Google Hangouts and Skype. In early 2018, the center then began internal testing and staff training. Tutors would pair up and conduct mock tutoring to see what limitations there were, and they found that an additional 15 minutes needed to be added for technology issues, multilingual needs, and general troubleshooting. After establishing general session guidelines, interested tutors were officially trained and certified in Fall 2018.



*Sample Tutoring Sessions,
Retrieved from SJSU Writing Center YouTube*

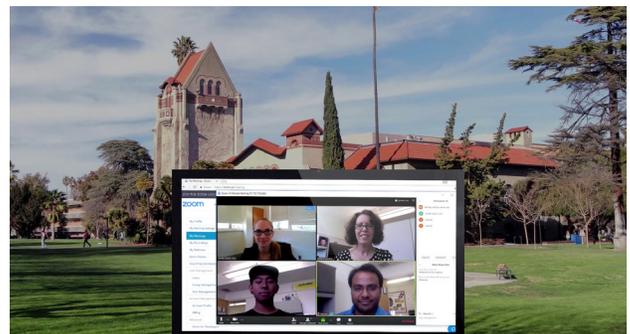
After nearly a year of planning, implementation, and training, the Writing Center officially launched the online tutor schedule on October 1, 2018, with first sessions beginning October 8, 2018. Though in its infancy, online tutoring is increasing in student popularity thanks to embedded tutors or professor-requested tutors who work with specialized classes like 100W. Embedded tutors are now officially certified for online tutoring and can split their time between virtual and traditional tutoring as fit for their tutees. If they're scheduled for 4-5 hours a

week, they might spend an hour in a classroom workshop, another hour for face-to-face tutoring, and the remaining three hours online. Judnick comments, "This resource now makes embedded tutors even more accessible because their tutees can work with them without having to come back to campus."

Online tutoring works like this:

1. A student schedules an online appointment through the Online Reservation System.
2. The student and a tutor (who is scheduled to work during that time) join the Zoom meeting room.
3. The student turns on their audio tool, video tool, or both.
4. The student displays their Word or Google Document with Track Changes on, using screen sharing.
5. The student and tutor communicate using their computer mics, working through the document with highlight tools, remote control, and annotation features.

Using Zoom as the virtual meeting room, online tutoring offers a space for a student to work with a tutor without being confined to a physical location. This service makes the Writing Center more accessible for students who work/take classes during tutoring hours, commute to school, or are more comfortable with virtual communication. Judnick thinks this resource will be most helpful for graduate students whose schedules don't often correspond with regular Writing Center hours. The Writing Center tutors are also excited about this new feature. Tutor and English major Roy Thompson says, "I think this is a great supplement for traditional face-to-face tutoring. Students are becoming increasingly reliant on technology to help them with their work, and we as tutors want to be a part of that."



*Introducing Zoom Web Conferencing
Retrieved from SJSU E-Campus Video*

The key difference between online and face-to-face tutoring is that there's a technological medium. Instead of physically writing on paper, tutors must use tools like highlighters, remote control access, and annotation features. Judnick notes, "People might be worried about lack of connection, but with Zoom, you have a video of

students reading through their paper and talk about it, screen share you can follow along together.” One thing both traditional and virtual tutoring still have in common is that they are not editing or proofreading services. Tutors are meant to develop students’ writing skills, helping them identify core issues like organization, grammatical structure, and overall flow. “I’m really pleased with how well Zoom allows us to mimic face-to-face work, and I think it’s a really great option for many students.”

One barrier Judnick notes is getting students up to speed with Zoom, because it’s not the most popular platform among young adults. That’s why each session is scheduled for 60 minutes long, with 15 minutes allowed for tech support and setup. When asked about other tech issues the staff encounter, she chuckles and says, “Sometimes students forget they’re on mute, but other than that, so far all the sessions have gone wonderfully.”

For this Fall semester, Judnick says the center can only provide 10 hours total of online tutoring per week (not including the embedded tutoring), but as the center continues to grow and hire more tutors, that number will increase. When asked about her goals for the Center, Judnick says, “The goal for the Writing Center is to branch out. We already have a successful blog, ‘The Write Attitude,’ which has garnered approximately 35,000 views to date. We also have a successful Instagram account, with content produced directly from the tutors, and we host popup events as well. The three mediums have made the Writing Center resources more accessible, and online tutoring just seemed a natural extension of that.”

From East to Dr. West: How Tennessee Native Sara West Navigated to the SJSU English Department

By Haley Jernigan and Claire Tromblee



Dr. Sara West

Photo by Artefact Image Co.

“Well, I don’t hear birds here—that’s weird,” explains Dr. Sara West, San José State University’s (SJSU) newest Assistant Professor in the Professional and Technical Writing program. Since moving to Silicon

Valley, she has been asked numerous times about the biggest difference between her hometown in East Tennessee and her new home of San José, but she kindly humors the question once again for her wide-eyed, native-Californian students. As students in the English department, we wanted to get to know Dr. West, so we asked her to join us at Philz Coffee—a Bay Area favorite—for a casual interview about her journey to SJSU.

In her time so far living in San José, Dr. West has gone for long bike rides, attended several street festivals, and begun working at the local cat adoption lounge, The Dancing Cat. She explains that she has yet to feel bored while living in San José because something is always going on. We nod in agreement as students file in and out of the surrounding establishments, buzzing about and bumping our small, metal table with their oversized backpacks. Though the location may be different, the bustle of academia is familiar to Dr. West, who comes with an impressive—and unconventional—academic career.

Dr. West’s appreciation for English as a subject came as no surprise because her mother taught English for several years. Dr. West graduated from Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee with a BA in English with a concentration in creative writing. She went on to pursue an MA in Literature and Language at East Tennessee University (ETSU), teaching first-year composition courses while she earned her degree. Over her time as a composition instructor, she discovered a love for helping students develop “writing skills that they could use in any field.” Dr. West’s experience teaching composition also ignited her interest in writing studies, inspiring her to pursue a PhD in English with a specialization in Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy at the University of Arkansas (UA).

The internet and social media had always fascinated Dr. West, and throughout her studies she began to see these spaces as platforms for communication. She discovered a breakthrough when she realized that she could fuse this interest with her doctorate studies, admitting, “I was stunned that there was a discipline within English, a subject I already loved so much, in which I could talk about social media and how people communicate [in online spaces].” The discovery of this exciting new intersection drew her closer to writing studies and, in fact, it became the subject of her dissertation and several of her publications.

Dr. Sara West officially earned her PhD with a Graduate Certificate in Technical Writing and Public Rhetorics in May 2018, and she looks forward to implementing these skills into the classroom at SJSU. Having recently been a student dealing with academic expecta-

tions and the uncertainties of the job market, Dr. West is prepared to not only instruct but empower student writers from all concentrations. During a conversation at Philz, Dr. West offered her advice for English students that are aspiring educators as well as for those pursuing professional and technical writing careers.

Her advice for those pursuing teaching: connect the dots. Dr. West tries to make every assignment useful beyond the classroom, saying, “Even if you are teaching something that someone is going to turn into you and never touch again, if you can connect how they will use skills from that [elsewhere], that’s going to be beneficial.” She observed the direct results of connecting critical thought to effective writing in her students while teaching at ETSU and UA. She sees the value of merging all aspects of English into a skill set for her students, saying “I think that with an English degree, you can do [many things], especially if you have professors who will show you how to connect the [curriculum] you’re doing with other [applications].”

For those who would like to pursue careers in professional and technical writing, she stresses, “You have to be the most adaptable writer in the whole world. When you go into a business or organization, they will have a very specific way of doing things. And you will have to write the way they want you to write. [You must understand] the rhetorical situation.”

The Professional and Technical Writing program was once a one-man show, led by Professor Mark Thompson. But after joining the program, Dr. West hopes the department will be able to expand and offer more courses throughout the year. She looks forward to working with the faculty here at SJSU, sharing, “We have a really well-rounded department. [Because of that,] students can attain a well-rounded degree.” When looking at the future of the department, Dr. West is hopeful that she may be able to incorporate a social media writing class as part of the curriculum. At this point, however, she is grateful to be teaching professional and technical writing to students, sharing that it’s nice to be able to teach in her area of study on her first year on the job.

The road to SJSU for Dr. West is proof to all students that there is no perfect academic journey. She

explored and studied many different English concentrations before finding her specialty, and this wide range of experience makes her a great addition to the faculty. Dr. West brings enthusiasm for her subject and a true desire to support her students’ journeys towards their personal goals in education.

The chat with Dr. West wound to a close as she finished off the last of her beverage. We walked back to campus and parted ways, excited about SJSU’s newest English professor. Dr. West heads for her office, where her door is always open to students and staff to discuss anything from academics to restaurant recommendations around the Bay Area. Although San José may not have as many birds as Tennessee or Arkansas, we’re very happy she’s flown out here to join the English Department at SJSU.



Dr. Sara West
Photo by Artefact Image Co.

Course Descriptions for Spring 2018

ENGL 20: The Graphic Novel

Edwin Sams, F 9:30-12:15

In English 20, we shall study how pulp literature—comic books, comic strips, underground comix, etc.—influenced the development of graphic novels and how the graphic novel has influenced literary novels and popular films. By studying works from diverse cultures and marginalized communities, as well as learning the historical and cultural backgrounds from which they were produced, we shall explore how this new genre expresses enduring human concerns.

ENGL 21: Mystery and Detective Fiction

Colton Sawyer, MW 9:00-10:15

Examines mystery or detective fiction from its inception in the 19th century and follows it across the globe as the genre has been taken on and developed by a variety of cultures.

ENGL 22: Fantasy and Science Fiction

Paul Douglass, MW 12:00-1:15

This course fulfills the lower division GE requirement in Arts and Letters (C2). It surveys important works of science fiction and fantasy over the last 200 years, including such authors as Edgar Allan Poe, H. Rider Haggard, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, H.G. Wells, H.P. Lovecraft, J.R.R. Tolkien, Philip Pullman, Isaac Asimov, Philip K. Dick, Ursula K. Le Guin, James Tiptree Jr., William Gibson, and others. Midterm, final, and other short written assignments, quizzes, etc.

ENGL 50: Beginnings to the “American Experiment”

Adrienne Eastwood, MW 10:30-11:45

Exploration of Anglo-Saxon, Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Colonial Writings in Britain and America. Class engages literary text, literary history, and historical events that shape the literature of the period.

ENGL 60: The Emergence of “British and “American” Literatures (1680-1860)

Allison Johnson, TR 1:30-2:45

This course explores the circulation of ideas, literary texts, and peoples back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean from the Restoration period in England up to the outbreak of the American Civil War. We will chart the literary effects of British imperialism, witness the birth of a distinctly American identity and literature, and examine literary depictions of the transatlantic slave trade from both sides of the pond.

ENGL 70: Emerging Modernisms and Beyond

William Wilson, MW 4:30-5:45

Part of the new survey sequence, English 70 is a 3-credit course that explores Modernist and twentieth-century writings of Britain and America. The class will engage literary texts, literary history, and historical events that shape the literature of the period, 1860 to the present.

ENGL 71: Creative Writing

Michael Tod Edgerton, MW 4:30-5:45

We'll look at a variety of literary genres and forms, writing processes and procedures in the course of our ADVENTURES IN MAKING ART WITH WORDS. We'll explore the genre conventions of POETRY, FICTION, and NONFICTION before moving between AND BEYOND them TO EXCITING NEW TERRITORY. We'll move our processes off the blank page to composition strategies that begin with and/or include other texts or art works, such as literary COLLAGE, ERASURE, EKPHRASIS, and MULTIMEDIA WRITING. Classes will be divided between discussion of model texts (mostly PDFs) and constructive critique of student work. Email Michael.Edgerton@sjsu.edu with any questions.

ENGL 71: Creative Writing

Tyson Morgan, F 9:30-12:15

This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of writing fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry. Our goal will be to locate what's most compelling about our individual voices within each genre, and to experiment

with various forms within those genres. We'll read works from the straightforward to the uncanny, and from the real to surreal, and we'll perform writing exercises and workshop our own pieces. Readings will include works from, but not limited to, the following authors: Edwidge Danticat, Jhumpa Lahiri, Edgar Allan Poe, Franz Kafka, Junot Díaz, Aleksandar Hemon, David Foster Wallace, Ryszard Kapuscinski, Ocean Vuong, Terrance Hayes, and John Donne.

ENG 71: Creative Writing

Leanne Lindelof, T 6:00-8:45

Sheree Kirby, TR 12:00-1:45

Joseph Navarro, MW 1:30-2:45

John Damm, MW 12:00-1:15

Kristian O'Hare TR 3:00-4:15

Examinations of works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction as expressions of human intellect and imagination, to comprehend the historic and cultural contexts, and to recognize issues related to writing by men and women of diverse cultural traditions. Students will also write poetry, creative nonfiction, and a short fiction.

ENGL 100A: Writing Competency Through Genres

Alesya Petty, TR 9:00-10:15; TR 10:30-11:45

Allison St. Dennis, MW 12:00-1:15

Prepares students for 100W through drafting, feedback, and revision to demonstrate writing competency. Develops ability to analyze written genres used in the students' chosen disciplines as well as write analytical and reflective essays.

ENGL 100W: Writing Workshop

Kathleen McSharry, TR 12:00-1:15; MW

12:00-1:15

Allison Johnson, TR 4:30-5:45

Advanced workshops in Reading and Composition.

ENGL 100WB: Written Communication: Business

Laimin Lo, F 9:30-12:15; R 6:00-8:45

Leanne Lindelof, MW 10:30-11:45

Sara West, MW 1:30-2:45

John Hessler, MW 3:00-4:15; 4:30-5:45; M 6:00

8:45; W 6:00-8:45

This hands-on course is designed to simulate actual business communication scenarios (oral and written) that are encountered by business professionals daily during the course of their careers. Assignments will enable students to practice and immediately apply both practical and theoretical aspects of organizational communication directly in real-life work situations. Communication mechanics and style (practical), and the appropriateness of messages and methods based on specific organizational situations (theoretical) will be emphasized.

ENGL 101: Introduction to Literary Criticism

Revathi Krishnaswamy, MW 12:00-1:15

Study of various historical and contemporary approaches to literature, including New Criticism, structuralism and post-structuralism, New Historicism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, feminism, queer theory, and ecocriticism. An emphasis will be placed on learning to apply these different methods of interpretation through a workshop format.

ENGL 103: Modern English

Nancy Stork, TR 1:30-2:45

Do you want to base your ideas "on" something or "off of" something? Do you care either way? Do you want to learn why verb particles are so slippery and changeable in English? This linguistically-based, historically-informed course will teach you grammar, fulfill department requirements and make you a better teacher. Guaranteed to make you think about language in new and interesting ways. Bonus: participles!

ENGL 103: Modern English

Linda Mitchell, MW 9:00-10:15

The growth and structure of modern English, including its phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Attention to social and regional varieties, with implications for language development and literacy among native and non-native speakers.

ENGL 106: Editing for Writers

Sara West, MW 12:00-1:15

In this class, we cover all the fundamentals that writers need to know about editing and working as a professional editor. This includes proofreading and copyediting, as well as sentence-level and document-level editing. The basics? Fix gnarly sentences. Make ugly paragraphs pretty. Learn how to work with other writers. Learn how to get editing jobs. Gain the confidence to explain your edits and defend them against the howling mobs! Required class for Professional and Technical Writing concentration.

ENGL 107: Professional Technical Writing

Mark Thompson, TR 12:00-1:15

In this survey of technical and professional writing, you'll learn how to write and design persuasive documents that get real things done in the real world. Projects include resumes and cover letters, proposals, instructions (video and writing), presentations, augmented reality apps, and user manuals for phone apps. We also learn a number of digital tools used to author and publish writing in the current tech landscape, such as SnagIt, DITA, and Madcap Flare. Required class for Professional and Technical Writing concentration.

ENGL 110: Visual Rhetoric & Document Design

Mark Thompson, TR 10:30-11:45

Combines visual rhetorical theory with design techniques to teach writers about the visual aspects of written and digital communication. In this hands-on course, students will design documents, including a poster, a book chapter, infographics, and promotional materials for lo-

cal nonprofits. We will also learn about website design and infographics.

ENGL112A: Children's Literature

Roohi Vora, 10:30-11:45

Daniel Hendel De Lao, MW 9:00-10:15

Study of literature for elementary and intermediate grades, representing a variety of cultures. Evaluation and selection of texts.

English 112B: Literature for Young Adults

Mary Warner, M 4:30-7:15

In ENGL 112B, we read *After the First Death*, *Speak*, *Whale Talk*, *Witness*, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, and *We Were Here*. Two additional texts—*Literature for Today's Young Adults* and *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning*—introduce YA literature's genres, demonstrate the complexity of the best YA lit, and provide author/book resources. Book talks, a book to film paper, and a unit of study/annotated bibliography requirement deepen student knowledge of YA Literature. The 4th credit enhancement includes the options of field experience and creating a blog devoted to a sub-genre of YA Lit.

ENGL 116: Myth in Literature

Nancy Stork, TR 10:30-11:45

A survey of major world mythologies, focusing on early texts. Thunder gods feature prominently as do werewolves and monkey kings. Selections from Egyptian, Zoroastrian, Sanskrit, Greco-Roman, Christian, African, Celtic, Norse, and Chinese. Critique the *Thor* movies and dazzle your friends.

ENGL 117B: Global Film, Literature, and Cultures

Faith Kirk, F 9:30-12:15

Using films and literary works, students will appreciate and understand the narratives (myths and other stories) that create and define cultural identity, explore cultural interaction, and illustrate cultural preservation and cultural difference over time.

ENGL 123B: Literature for Global Understanding: Africa

Balance Chow, TR 9:00-10:15

Different regions of Africa will be visited by way of traditional and modern texts addressing topics such as Afrocentrism, slave trade, colonialism and decolonization, racism, genocide, language, class, gender, religion, modernity, globalization, war, political movements, and social activism. Satisfies Area V in Advanced GE.

ENGL 123D: Literature for Global Understanding: Asia

Balance Chow, TR 1:30-2:45

This course examines the literary production and cultural heritage of Asia, with an emphasis on modern works of fiction representing India, China, Japan, and Korea, paying particular attention to social, economic, and political forces (esp. globalization) transforming the region. Satisfies Area V in Advanced GE.

ENGL 125: European Literature: Homer through Dante

Linda Mitchell, MW 10:30-11:45

This course offers an introduction to some of the major literary works of the first 2,000 years of Western Culture—works of great genius and superb craft. They are as much a part of our heritage as that which we receive from our parents. Our goal this semester is to take possession of that heritage—like heirs who have come of age—by understanding how these works are connected to each other and to us via a series of parallel and contrasting patterns of ideas and experiences that form a path of human continuity across time and place. Students will engage and explore the texts from a variety of contexts and viewpoints: textual, literary, political, social and cultural; become familiar with a range of critical approaches to the texts; and demonstrate a working knowledge of the texts' influences within the Western literary tradition.

ENGL 127: Contemporary Theatre

Kathleen Normington, TR 1:30-2:45

European and American playwrights from 1950 to the present and important theatre practices for this period.

ENGL 129: Introduction to Career Writing

Sara West, MW 9:00-10:15

In this course, students write to get published in the places that they read and to practice in the types of writing they might do in the workplace. We'll work on skills for writing for copywriting, creative nonfiction publications, social media, and marketing and communications. Students also write and produce the English Department newsletter, a short video or podcast episode, and their own blogs. Expand your portfolio, learn some new skills, and march boldly forth with a publishable work in hand. Required class for the Professional and Technical Writing concentration.

ENGL 130: Writing Fiction

Nicholas Taylor, MW 10:30-11:45

Christine Vines, 12:00-1:15

Prerequisite: English 71. This workshop focuses on the craft of fiction writing. We will begin the semester by reading the most recent edition of *Best American Short Stories* to examine the building blocks of character-driven fiction. Each student is required to submit two original short stories for review by the class. Lively participation and written commentary is required. In lieu of a final exam, you will turn in a substantial revision of one story.

ENGL 131: Writing Poetry

Alan Soldofsky, MW 12:00-1:15

ENGL 131 is primarily an intermediate/advanced-level poetry writing workshop. Students will write poems and then "work shop" them with peers in the classroom and outside the classroom on Canvas (SJSU's learning management system). This class includes exercises and assignments in creative reading as well as creative writing. Students will also each week read and practice analyzing a diverse selection of published poems—mostly in written in open and some in closed forms. We will explore the craft of the poetic line, and work toward gaining greater mastery of the craft of writing poetry in contemporary modes and styles as well as in traditional forms. The workshop's emphasis will

be on poetry that pays close attention to language and poems rich in idioms. Also, we'll read and write poems that contain closely observed details of the here-and-now that turn the world into words. Poet Donald Revell believes that poems are "presences...the consequences of vivid presentations." Grades will be based on a final poetry portfolio and two in-class presentations. Also required will be attending at least two poetry readings by published poets on campus and/or in the greater Bay Area (or readings that can be watched online). Students will write short review essays about the poets they saw read, after studying the work of these poets (which should be readily available online and/or via used bookstores).

ENGL 133: Reed Magazine

Keenan Norris, T 3:00-5:45

With roots that run back to 1867 on the San José State University campus, *Reed* is the oldest literary journal west of the Mississippi. We publish outstanding fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and art from around the globe. This course is a two-semester sequence in which students produce this year's issue of *Reed*, the San José State literary magazine. Students perform all editorial and production duties themselves, including reading submissions, selling advertising, designing the layout, promoting the issue, and distributing the finished product.

ENGL 135: Writing Nonfiction

Keenan Norris, TR 12:00-1:15

Creative nonfiction encompasses a wide range of prose: memoir, personal essay, travel and lifestyle writing, biography, profile writing, science writing, nature writing, gonzo and editorial writing. In this class we will explore that range, with particular focus on memoir, personal essay, profile and editorial writing. The goals of this course are to help you improve your writing; to practice research, interview and observational skills; to recognize the strengths of published work; and to discuss your own and others' prose. But first and foremost it is a writing course.

ENGL 139: Visiting Authors

Selena Anderson, MW 1:30-2:45

Study of works by contemporary writers participating in the Major Authors series and other programs sponsored by the Center for Literary Arts. Includes meetings with visiting authors and attending their various presentations. Recommended for the Creative Writing Concentration.

ENGL 140B: Beowulf

Nancy Stork, TR 9:00-10:15

We will read and translate all 3,182 lines of this enigmatic and thrilling poem from the original Old English. Prerequisite: one semester of Old English language study.

ENGL 144: Shakespeare I

Adrienne Eastwood, MW 9:00-10:15

Major plays such as *Twelfth Night*, *Henry IV, Part I*, and *Hamlet*.

ENGL 145: Shakespeare and Performance

Adrienne Eastwood, MW 4:30-5:45

In this course, we will examine in-depth several of Shakespeare's plays, specifically addressing issues of performance and interpretation. Placing each play in the context of its original performance during Shakespeare's time, and its life on stage and screen in the ensuing centuries, encourages an engagement with the ways in which re-imagining Shakespeare's works helps them retain their vitality and cultural relevance. Paying particular attention to modern productions, we will analyze the ways in which production elements such as setting, casting, staging, costumes, editing, and individual performances shape and create meaning (or fail to do so) for the audiences of today. Placing these plays within this context of performance will raise larger issues about the complex relationships between the Shakespearean canon and its ever-changing audiences. Students will respond to each Shakespearean play text through both writing and oral interpretation, integrating speech and dramatic performance with an understanding of the complexities of plot, characterization, and dramatic form. Required for the English Single-Subject Credential.

ENGL 165: Topics in Ethnic American Literature

Theodora Barry, MW 1:30-2:45

Focused study of a topic in ethnic American Literature, such as African American, Asian American, Latino American, or ethnic autobiography. Check schedule of classes for current offering.

ENGL 168: The American Novel

Paul Douglass, MW 1:30-2:45

This English major course follows the development of the American novel from romance, through realism and naturalism, to modernism and post-modernism, helping you develop your understanding of what the genre is, or might be—and to whom. Writers to be discussed included Poe, Jacobs, Wharton, Faulkner, Hurston, Hemingway, Nabokov, Morrison, and Malae, as well as consideration of a graphic novel by Mazuchelli. This four-unit course will require reading one additional novel about which you will write a research paper.

ENGL 169: Ethnicity in American Literature

Balance Chow, TR 3:00-4:15

This course concentrates on modern literary texts in relation to the formation of the concept of self, the place of self in society, and issues of equality and structured inequality in the United States. It addresses issues of race, culture, history, politics, economics, etc., that arise as contexts relevant to the study of literature by and/or about Americans (including immigrants) with Indigenous, African, European, Latino(a)/Hispanic, and Asian backgrounds. Satisfies Area S in Advanced GE.

ENGL 172: The Arts in US Society

Elizabeth Linden, M 3:00-5:45

Study of American arts and artists in their aesthetic, social, and political contexts, focusing on 20th and 21st centuries. Arts examined include architecture, poetry, music, visual arts, dance, theatre, performance art, and fiction. Special emphasis on issues of cultural diversity.

ENGL 173: Thinking About Contemporary World Arts

Elizabeth Linden, MW 10:30-11:45

Victoria Rue, TR 1:30-2:45

An interdisciplinary course on contemporary arts and culture which investigates connections between arts disciplines and world cultures. The course uses critical and creative thinking as the lens to focus on issues in the arts, especially personal and cultural identities.

ENGL 202: Poetic Craft & Theory

Alan Soldofsky, M 7:00-9:45

Poetry as a literary genre - its patterns and subtypes (such as the epic, lyric, pastoral, and elegy). Attention to the theories of poetics applied to practical criticism. Prior permission of graduate advisor may be repeatable once for credit. Prerequisite: Classified standing or instructor consent.

ENGL 208: Seminar in Comparative Literature

Balance Chow, W 7:00-9:45

Study of selected topics in comparative literature. Students will be encouraged to do some reading and research in a language other than English. With prior permission of graduate advisor repeatable twice for credit. Prerequisite: Classified standing or instructor consent.

ENGL 232: Seminar in Romanticism

Katherine Harris, R 7:00-9:45

Study of selected British writers from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With prior permission of graduate advisor may be repeatable once for credit. Prerequisite: Classified standing or instructor consent. Note: This course satisfies graduate-level GWAR in this master's program.

ENGL 241; Fiction Writing Workshop

Nayomi Munaweera R 4:00-6:45

Fiction writing as preparation for thesis. Study of canonical and contemporary fiction and fiction produced by students. Intensive workshop experience. May be repeatable twice for credit.

ENGL 254: Seminar in Genre Studies of American Literature

Allison Johnson, T 7:00-9:45

American Poetry, Beginnings to 1900, will explore themes and tropes central to the genre's development in the New World, including the self, the nation, the home, and the environment. Reading well-known, lesser-known, and anonymous poets, we will pay close attention to publication history, print culture, and issues of circulation and consumption.

ENGL 257: Seminar on the History of Rhetoric

Ryan Skinnell, M 4:00-6:45

The history of rhetoric is often traced to Ancient Greece, when rhetoric supposedly emerged and thrived alongside the birth of democracy. In this story, rhetoric is uniquely Western—a function of Greece and Rome's influences in the history of civilization. Recently, however, historians have reimagined civilization's western roots and developed broader, "worldly" perspectives on histories, rhetorics, and histories of rhetorics. Taking our cue from "worldly" rhetoricians and historians, we will try to understand the arguments involved in histories of rhetorics—what is at stake, why they continue, what we can learn, why we should care, and perhaps even what we might contribute.



Letter from the Chair: Noelle Brada-Williams

San José State University is now enacting a plan that has been in the works for several years—finding more time and resources for faculty to do original research, scholarship, or creative activities (known as RSCA). For English faculty, this usually means some kind of



Dr. Noelle Brada-Williams, Department Chair

publication but RSCA varies widely across all of the disciplines we study at the university, anything from a dance performance to devising a new way to measure climate change. Ultimately, this move will serve to enrich education at San José State as faculty will be able to bring the most cutting-edge ideas and up-to-date knowledge of our fields into our classrooms for the benefit of our students. It has taken several years to amass the resources needed to essentially “buy” faculty time (that is, finding the money to pay others to teach classes while some faculty members use the time to do RSCA), and most importantly, to determine how RSCA will be evaluated (when we all do such very different things) and thus, in turn, which faculty have the best research/creative projects and are therefore the most deserving of these resources.

Although the project is going into effect in Spring 2019, we did not learn which faculty would receive this honor until November 16th, the Friday before Thanksgiving, after most of you had already enrolled in your Spring courses. In all, seven of our English Department faculty have received the honor of receiving one course off a semester to devote to their research. Now, all of our assistant professors will have a course off until they receive tenure and three of our tenured faculty have been given five years of one course off per semester in which they can devote themselves to long-range projects.

While a wonderful step towards making us more competitive with the research output of universities like the UC's, in the short term, it will undeniably hurt. You might think of it as growing pains. To put seven cours-

es in perspective for our department, the entire spring offerings for our combined MA and MFA programs for Spring 2019 was exactly seven courses as of the morning of November 16th. Knowing that some classes would be cancelled, but not knowing which ones, I had originally scheduled more undergraduate major courses than we needed for the spring. However, in a couple cases, people who received the awards were already doing tasks that were essentially irreplaceable—like serving as the graduate coordinator or teaching a required class when no one else with the required skills to teach that class is available. Even though campus was closed the day we got the news due to the smoke from the Camp Fire, we were able to notify students whose classes were cancelled and to re-staff other classes taught by six of the seven faculty members by the following Tuesday. The seventh may have an additional “reassignment” from the college, so it is a bit trickier. It is my hope that all of these changes will have already been finalized before this newsletter goes to print. Wherever possible, we have sought to create the least harm to students by only cancelling the smallest classes or by re-staffing whenever possible.

Looking ahead, we have been given permission to hire two new tenure-line faculty members to start next fall, one in Global or World Literature, and one in Early Modern Literature. Candidates for these positions will visit at the end of January and the beginning of February. All of them will give a public talk where you can hear about their research and get a sense of how they might teach. You will also be able to ask them questions. Try to find time to get to know them and give our recruitment team your feedback. Your insight might just be what helps us choose the very best people to join our department. Make your voice count!

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