Welcoming Our New Faculty

In the fall semester of 2014, we welcomed two assistant professors and three instructors to our faculty. All five have greatly strengthened our department and our programs; we’re delighted to have them. Let me introduce them to you.

A native of Altoona, Pennsylvania, Amy Mallory-Kani recently completed her PhD at the University of Albany–SUNY, where she wrote her dissertation on “Medico-Politics and English Literature, 1790-1830: Immunity, Humanity, and Subjectivity.” Her dissertation work will also inform her first book project, already well under way. This coming spring, the prestigious journal The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation, will publish Amy’s article on Mary Wollstonecraft’s “Medico Politics”; later in 2015, European Romantic Review will publish her essay on “Wordsworth’s Poetics and Politics of Immunity.” In her first semester at MSU, Amy taught Romantic Poets and Prose Writers to majors and graduate students, who completed the semester by presenting conference papers on “Romanticism(s).” Amy also taught new majors in a section of Critical Writing and Research in Literary Studies.

With a joint appointment to English and to the Shackouls Honors College, Eric Vivier taught Literary Criticism for future high school English teachers; he also taught the Quest course for Honors students, who learned about Western intellectual currents from the classical period through the Enlightenment. A native of Buffalo, New York, Eric came to us with his new PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he completed his dissertation on “Controversial Discourse: English Satire, 1588-1603. In spring 2015, English Literary Renaissance will publish Eric’s essay on “John Bridges, Martin Marprelate, and the Rhetoric of Satire.” In his first semester at MSU, Eric drafted an article on Middleton’s Revenger’s Tragedy and served as faculty advisor to undergraduates producing the creative arts journal The Streetcar.

Abigail Voller, Katie Doughty, and Daniel Austin performed so well for us as lecturers that we promoted them to instructor. All three completed their MAs in our department.

In her first semester at this rank, Abigail taught Introduction to Literature, Accelerated Composition II, and two sections of Basic Writing. Equally versatile, Katie taught Basic Writing and Teaching Grammar, a sophomore-level course we offer for primary education majors; and Daniel taught Introduction to Literature and Composition. Daniel also serves as a consultant to faculty involved in “Maroon and Write,” MSU’s program on writing-across-the-curriculum.

All three instructors have other interests that energize their teaching. A resident of Columbus, Mississippi, Abigail pursues research on Basic Writing pedagogy; she also serves on our Composition Committee, teaches in the Governor’s School program, and writes fiction. Also a resident of Columbus, Katie enjoys research on curriculum development and writing pedagogy. A native of Grenada, Mississippi, Daniel studies graphic novels as well as digital and interactive narratives.
Dr. Tommy Anderson came to MSU in 2005. Since then, he has established national and international reputations for excellence as a Renaissance scholar. Across our campus, Dr. Anderson has also won universal praise for his brilliant teaching. Combined with his extensive professional service—service that has inspired and directed so many of MSU’s best students—his decade of superior research has won him many awards, among them the Humanities Researcher of the Year Award for 2010, the Dean’s Eminent Scholar Award for 2011, and the 2014 Humanities Teacher of the Year Award granted by the Mississippi Humanities Council and the College of Arts & Sciences.

In addition to his many articles and reviews over these years, Dr. Anderson has published two widely respected and oft-quoted books: *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* (Ashgate 2006) and *Acts of Reading: Interpretations Reading Practices, and the Idea of the Book in John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments* (U Delaware P, 2010). Recently, his article on Marlowe’s Edward II appeared in the *Shakespeare Bulletin*, and he has secured a place for his essay on Coriolanus in a forthcoming book on *Shakespeare and Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Exchange*. Most significantly, Dr. Anderson has signed a contract with Edinburgh University Press to publish his third book on Shakespeare’s Fugitive Politics.

Energized by his writing, Dr. Anderson has always shared his erudition with English majors and graduate students in his Shakespeare courses and recently with Honors students in the Quest course, which introduces first-year students in the Shackouls Honors College to the intellectual currents of Western culture from Classical times through the Enlightenment. In his work with the Honors College, Dr. Anderson has also taught the study abroad course, “Shakespeare in London and Oxford,” a life-changing experience that has generated much learning and many smiles, as the photo below bears witness.

I have always enjoyed the impossible task of separating Dr. Anderson’s teaching from his professional service. This linkage between teaching and service defined his seven-year tenure as our Director of Undergraduate Studies, a position that allowed him to teach advisees how to navigate the major and how to enter the profession even before completing the BA. Happily, though no longer in charge of our BA program, he has continued as advisor for ten of our majors. He also continues promoting and enabling undergraduate research, as seen by two of his students, Lien Van Geel and Kylie Dennis, having been accepted to present their research at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research. Further, he has served his university as Director of Prestigious External Scholarships and Mentor for the Presidential Scholars. His brilliance in these two roles has brought credit to our department, not only in the selection of Field Brown, his mentee, as a 2014 Rhodes Scholar, but also in public settings, such as the Presidential Scholar Senior Banquet, where his speech inspired us all. This amazing decade of support for undergraduates motivates my plan to nominate Dr. Anderson for the 2015 Oldham Outstanding Faculty Mentor Award.
In addition to the publications and awards listed above for Amy Mallory-Kani, Eric Vivier, and Tommy Anderson, our faculty contributed significantly to the scholarship in their respective fields, and several received awards for their work. Selected examples follow:

Ted Atkinson placed “Mississippi (and Bensonhurst) Burning: Racist Enjoyment, Fantasies of Containment, and the Real of Social Evil” in *A History of Evil in Pop Culture*. Additionally, his essay on “Class Fantasies, Hollywood Liberalism, and the Bush Doctrine in Film Adaptations of *Two Soldiers* and *All the King’s Men*” appeared in *Faulkner and Warren*.

Greg Bentley presented a paper on “Tarquin’s Plot: Sublimation, Rape, and the Desexualization of Desire” at the South-Central Renaissance Conference; he also spoke on “Hedda Gabler and the Geometry of Desire” at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Philological Association.

Shalyn Claggett has contracted with Michigan University Press to publish her collection of critical essays titled *Strange Science: Investigating the Limits of Knowledge in the Victorian Age*.

Peter DeGabriele published “The Legal Fiction and Epistolary Form: Frances Burney’s *Evelina*” in *the Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*. He also contracted with Bucknell University Press to publish his book on *Sovereign Power and the Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Literature and the Problem of the Political*.

Lara Dodds, recipient of the Dean’s Eminent Scholar Award, published two articles: “The Problem of Courtship in Milton’s Writings on Divorce and Paradise Lost” in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*; “Bawds and Housewives: Margaret Cavendish and the Work of ‘Bad Writing’” in *Early Modern Studies Journal*.

Lyn Fogle won the A&S Humanities Teacher Award; she also published her research on “Gender, Sexuality, and Multilingualism in the Language Classroom” in *Challenges for Language Education and Policy*.


Wendy Herd has her research on “Cross-Modal Differences between Native and Nonnative Spanish Speakers” forthcoming in *Studies in Hispanic and Lusophone Linguistics*.

Holly Johnson published “The Imaginative Landscape of an English Monk-Preacher: Robert Ripon and the Court of Memory” in *Medieval Studies*; she also presented a paper on Ripon at the International Colloquium, University of Geneva.

Mike Kardos received the A&S Humanities Research Award. His story “Animals” also won prestigious Pushcart Prize. His novel *Before He Finds Her* will reach print this spring.


Kelly Marsh presented a paper on “Character Narration and the Plotting of Allusion in Ian McEwan’s *Sweet Tooth*” at the International Conference on Narrative.

Lecturer Jessica Mosely Lockhart published “Something Happened Somewhere around Dinner” in *Storm Cellar Quarterly*.

Katie Pierce published 16 poems, among them “The Tornado Wants a Companion” in *The Cincinnati Review*, “Heroines” and “Relevant Details” in *Pleiades*, and “Imaginary Vacation Scenario #2” and “True Story” in *Minnesota Review*.


Andrea Spain has a piece in the forthcoming collection *Steve Tomasula: The Art and Science of New Media Fiction*.

Kudos for Our Students and Alumni

We inducted eleven majors into our Xi Chapter of the English Honorary society, Sigma Tau Delta: Molly Beckwith, Kylie Dennis, Logan Johnson, Belle Lang, Breana Miller, Elise Motz, Margaret Pitts, Sarah Sones, Brandi Torre, Michelle Waits, and Wilson Whitten.

The Howell and Elizabeth Gwin Scholarship Winners: Margaret Cooper, Kylie Dennis, Whitney Knight, Emma Kate Poindexter, Hannah Rinehart, and Noelle Roberge

The Eugene Butler Creative Writing Award Winners: Matt Garner, Nick Mears, Kayla Pearce, Noelle Roberge, and Jermaine Thompson

The Roger LeMoyne Dabbs Memorial Scholarship Winners: Molly Beckwith, Lien Van Geel, and Kylie Dennis

The William H. Magruder Memorial Scholarship Winners: Molly Beckwith and Lien Van Geel

The Helen W. Skelton Endowed Scholarship Winner: Emma Kate Poindexter

The Ann Pittman Andrews Memorial Endowed Scholarship Winner: Kylie Dennis

The Brasher-Dazey Writing Award: Jennifer Aust

The Peyton Ward Williams, Jr. Distinguished Writing Award Winners: Kylie Dennis, Lien Van Geel (Honorable Mention)

The Nolan Book Award Winners: Molly Beckwith, Catherine Dunn, and Josh Branscomb

The Donald Zacharias Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year Award Winner: Jessica Burton

MA student Jermaine Thompson won a fellowship to study at the Martha’s Vinyard Institute of Creative Writing for 2014.

Kylie Dennis presented her paper on “The Revival of the Victorian Fairy-Story Heroine in Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings” at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research at the University of Kentucky. Field Brown also presented his paper on “Langston Hughes’s Trailblazing Literary Aesthetic. Their papers were published in the conference Proceedings.

Kate Barber, MA 2013, published her creative writing thesis with the online Cape Fear Review.

Lisa Fulgham Scheibner, MA 2013, and Jessica Moseley, MA 2014, published their poetry in Sixfold.

Having defended his senior thesis on Ralph Ellison, Field Brown, BA 2014, has begun his graduate study at Oxford University, UK, as a Rhodes Scholar. During his MSU years, Field received key mentoring from Drs. Tommy Anderson, Andrea Spain, Donald Shaffer, and Chris Snyder. See feature article in the January 2014 volume of “Rhymes and Reasons.”

MA student Will Knight received the Taylor Medal from Ole Miss for his distinguished work as an English major.

Our students have published two volumes of The Streetcar, a creative arts journal featuring the work of many of our English majors. Hannah Humphrey and Field Brown edited the first volume; Hannah Humphrey and Daniel Hart edited the second volume. Drs. Shalyn Claggett and Eric Vivier serve as faculty advisors.

MA student Laura Purl presented her essay on “Paulina’s Rejection of the Traditional Pauline Woman in Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale” at the South-Central Renaissance Conference.

Seniors Greg Marcus, Izzy Robinson, Hannah Humphrey, and Daniel Hart presented papers at the Honors College Undergraduate Research Forum. Daniel and Hannah won first- and third-place awards respectively.

Kristen Dechert, MA 2007, and Alexis Nordin, BA 2002, co-authored papers presented at the International Conference on Education.

Sara Ashton LaRosa, BA 2014, and Caroline Baker, MA 2013, received substantial scholarships to study law at Mississippi College.

Kirk Cochran, MA 2013, has secured a position with Teach for America.

Daniel Hart, BA 2014, has taken a position with the Mississippi Teacher Corps.

Leah Evans, BA 2013, received a graduate assistantship in the Department of English at the University of South Alabama.

Molly Beckwith, BA 2015, published her poem “Kudzu” in the national literary magazine The Pinch. Molly also won first place in the MSU Writing Contest for her poem “If I Do Not Believe You”; Belle Lang, BA 2015, won second place for her poem “Romance and Explosions.” In the same contest, majors Alan Coats and Danielle Stratman won first and second place respectively for their fiction.

The photo below features most of our Teaching Assistants for 2014:

Front row, left to right: Rachel Davis, Robin Walden, Loree Long, Whitney Knight, Laura Park; back row: Matt Morgan, Greg Marcus, Jermaine Thompson, Nick Mears, Sava Kolev, Hannah Rinehart, Tom Lammert, Caitlin Branum, Jalesha Parks, Elizabeth West.
The Linguistics and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs in the English Department offer additional qualifications and research experiences for students in the English Department as well as for students across the university. We offer an undergraduate level and a graduate level TESOL Certificate, which prepares students to teach English outside of the United States. For students who would like to teach ESL (English as a Second Language) in US public schools, the TESOL Certificate can be added to an existing teaching license as an ESL Endorsement. As of May 2014, we also offer a Minor in Linguistics for those students who are interested in studying language but do not plan to teach.

The number of students completing work in Linguistics and TESOL continues to grow each semester. A total of thirteen students completed the TESOL Certificate during the 2013 – 2014 academic year, and seventeen more recipients are expected by May 2015. Five students completed the new Minor in Linguistics in May 2014, and six more recipients are expected by May 2015. We have also resumed the TESOL Practicum, which gives students the opportunity to teach English in Chile while earning credit toward the TESOL Certificate. Thad Daniels (Philosophy Major), pictured in front of the Geoglyphs in the Atacama Desert, took advantage of this program during Summer 2014. We hope to see more students working with language learners in Iquique, Chile next summer.

Our students are also finding exciting opportunities after graduation. For example, after completing their TESOL Certificates at MSU, Elise Boone (2013 BA English) and Ethan Welford (2014 BA Communications) secured jobs teaching English in South Korea. Similarly, TESOL Certificate recipient Thomas Shuff (2013 BA General Liberal Arts) accepted a job teaching English in Japan. Fellow linguistics students Sarah McCain (2012 BA English) and Daniel Hart (2014 BA English) are currently teaching English and working toward an MA in Education with the Mississippi Teacher Corps. Other linguistics and TESOL students also chose to pursue graduate degrees in competitive programs around the country. Mallory Bubar (2014 MA German) entered Penn State’s German PhD program and May Barthès (2014 MA French) began work on her PhD in French at the University of Alabama. These are only a few highlights of our students’ successes. Many more linguistics and TESOL students went on to teach in public schools, to teach abroad, and to complete graduate work in MA and PhD programs. All of our students should definitely be proud of their accomplishments.

We have been working hard to give our students opportunities to work in the community and to complete research. Dr. Lyn Fogle has developed the Methods in TESOL course to be a service-learning experience, and her students have worked with MSU extension offices in Scott and DeSoto counties to design and implement English as a Second Language materials in those areas. Lyn’s students are also working with Bancorp South in Vardaman, MS to help bank employees to better meet the
needs of their linguistically diverse patrons. Additionally, students in Methods in TESOL and Approaches to TESOL have volunteered as language partners and tutors at MSU’s ESL Center and at local public schools.

Working in collaboration with Dr. Ginger Pizer, Carrie Mastley (2014 MA English) researched the representations of women in modern media. Carrie presented her talk, “Relevance Theory and Constructed Nerdiness in CBS’s The Big Bang Theory,” at the Symposium About Language and Society (SALSA) meeting in Austin. We are now lucky to have Carrie as a lecturer in the English Department.

Two of our faculty members were awarded Henry Family Research Fund grants. Dr. Wendy Herd’s project “The Effect of Language Background on the Perception of Foreign-Accented Speech” was funded from May 2013 to August 2014. This funding supported two undergraduate research assistants (Savana Alexander – Spanish Major and Whitney Knight – English Major) and one graduate research assistant (Robin Walden – English Major). Both Savana and Whitney have gone on to complete graduate work, with Whitney working on an MA in English with a linguistics thesis. Whitney Knight was also awarded research funding from the Office of Research and Economic Development to complete data collection for her thesis project, “The Southern Vowel Shift of Women from Mississippi”. Wendy and Whitney plan to present findings from both projects at the Acoustical Society of America annual meeting in Pittsburgh in May.

Funding for Dr. Lyn Fogle’s project “Language Ideologies in the South: Multilingualism, Immigration and Education in Public Discourse” began in May 2014, and the project is ongoing. This award supported two graduate research assistants from the English Department, Sava Kolev and Robin Walden. Lyn and Sava will present these research findings at the American Association of Applied Linguistics annual meeting in Toronto in March.

Our programs in Linguistics and TESOL are clearly preparing our students to succeed both academically and professionally. More than that, our students are making a difference at local and global levels. We couldn’t be more pleased with their progress nor more optimistic about their future.
It’s hard to say whether there was ever a time in my life when I knew what I wanted to be “when I grew up.” Although I was intensely curious as a child, this drive to learn and question the world never really factored into my perceptions of schoolwork or my plans for a future career. So, when it came time to enter college and select a major, I was admittedly a bit lost. I was overwhelmed by the expansive list of majors and areas of study available to me and I found it extremely difficult to narrow down my interests to one specific major. I ultimately chose to focus on English and this ended up being the best possible choice that I could have made. Although arguably less practical than other skills that I learned from my courses (e.g., writing papers and analyzing texts), perhaps most important to me is that majoring in English taught me about the strong power (and importance) of language. Before college, I never thought deeply about the words that I used or the multiple meanings and implications they carried with them. Words were simply neutral symbols to me – their only job was to 
.objectively reference items in the world. Over my four years in the English department, however, that misconception was not only corrected – it was shattered. I learned that, in reality, the words we use do have power and that language does matter. Just as words have the capacity to describe objects, they also have the power to convince, to manipulate, to sway, and to incite to action. As George Lakoff put it, “English does not just fit the world. English fits the way you understand the world via your frames.”

Once I began to realize the ambiguity and complexity of language, I developed a much stronger appreciation for the skills that I was taught in my English courses. What’s great about majoring in English is that you don’t just learn about languages and books and stories – you develop the skills necessary to critically analyze, interpret, and develop arguments about these sources. It is this perspective that can ultimately benefit you in a number of different ways. You learn to question the things that you hear and read. You learn to debate. You learn to deal with constructive criticism. You learn to really wrestle with difficult and complex ideas. You learn that there isn’t just one answer to a question – rather, there are many possible answers that can all be interpreted and argued in different ways.

Currently, I am pursuing a PhD in Cognitive Science at Arizona State University. I am affiliated with the Learning Sciences Institute, which is a multi-disciplinary organization that focuses on understanding how students learn and on developing methods to enhance their learning. From a practical standpoint, my English degree has been useful in helping me to make sense of complex issues and ideas related to learning and education. In reflecting on how a student learns, there are a number of variables to consider that range from localized issues, such as their cognitive capacity, to more global variables, such as the attitude of their...
teachers or their socioeconomic status. One of the biggest challenges I have faced in my research is learning to consider and think deeply about this host of variables, rather than simply reducing students to a number on an IQ test or a product of a bad home life. It is the critical analysis of these issues that has been key to my success in graduate school, and which is directly tied to the skills I was taught in my English courses.

Beyond the skills I was taught as an English major, the motivation for most of my research is also intrinsically tied to the knowledge I gained as an English major. As a graduate student, the overarching theme of my research is to better understand the cognitive processes involved in language comprehension, writing, knowledge acquisition, and conceptual change, and to apply that understanding to educational practice by developing and testing educational technologies. In other words, I want to identify and teach students the strategies that are needed to produce, comprehend, and manipulate language in ways that will allow them to succeed in any number of contexts. Ultimately, my goal is to work as a professor and to conduct and disseminate research that specifically teaches these language skills to members of underprivileged groups, such as non-native English speakers and students living in poverty.

David Foster Wallace once said, “There are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talk about in the great outside world of wanting and achieving. The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline…That is real freedom. That is being educated, and understanding how to think. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing.” To me, this kind of freedom that Wallace is referencing – this freedom to think well – is the single greatest strength of the English major. Throughout your time in the English department, you will undoubtedly learn a lot about stories, and history, and human nature. You might learn to recite poetry, to teach a class, or even experiment with fiction writing. All of these experiences will likely teach you important skills that you will be able to use for many years to come. Most importantly, however, you will learn how to question, how to analyze, and how to interpret the world in a way that many people never learn. It is these skills that have ultimately been most valuable for me and that I hope to continue to develop throughout my time as a researcher.

Laura Allen

Thank You to our Alumni and Friends

Over the past ten years, our generous alumni and friends have donated over $190,000 to support our scholarships and awards as well as the English Advancement Fund, which helps to fund travel and equipment needs for faculty and students.

For example, we have received major donations from Ms. Evelyn Beamon and Ms. Helen M. Messer to support the Richard F. Patteson Endowed Scholarship; from Dr. and Mrs. James D. Land and the Ireland Family Partnership to support the Helen W. Skelton Endowed Scholarship; from Mr. and Mrs. Stacey W. Golf to support the Stacy Goff Endowed Scholarship; from Drs. Grace and Dean Boswell, Ms. Donna L. Holton, and Mr. Ryan O. MacKie to support the English Advancement Fund; from Drs. Nancy and Guy Hargrove to support the Jabberwock Fund; from Mr. R. David Murrell to support the Mary Ann Dazey and Linda Brasher Memorial Scholarship; and from Dr. and Mrs. Clyde Willams, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Phillips, Dr. and Mrs. Richard B. Wolf, and Dr. Ben M. Waggoner to support the Howell and Elizabeth Gwin Endowed Scholarship.

Of course, our needs to continue to grow. In addition to supporting writing contests, scholarships, travel, and equipment, we have a growing Writing Center—now with five sites—that needs on-going support.

If you’re interested in making a tax-deductible donation to help us to meet these needs, please contact Alex McIntosh, Director of Development for the College of Arts & Sciences at MSU. You can reach Mr. McIntosh at 662-325-2646, or at amcintosh@foundation.msstate.edu. You may also visit our departmental website and click on “Friends, Alumni, Visitors,” then on “Support our Mission”.

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