We would like to introduce you to ...

The Department of English proudly introduces you to our excellent new faculty members and teaching assistants:

Dr. Ted Atkinson holds a PhD from LSU. A specialist in Southern literature, he published *Faulkner and the Great Depression: Aesthetics, Ideology, and Cultural Politics* with University of Georgia Press (2006). Dr. Atkinson will teach American literature surveys, upper-level courses in Southern literature, and seminars in Faulkner.

Dr. Peter DeGabriele just completed his PhD at State University of New York at Buffalo. His article “Intimacy, Survival, and Resistance: Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year*” will soon be published in the prestigious journal *English Literary History*. A specialist in the long eighteenth century, Dr. DeGabriele will teach English literature surveys and upper-level courses in eighteenth-century literature as well as seminars in the eighteenth-century novel.

New Lecturers
Nick White, Katie Doughty, and Laura Vernon completed their MAs in our department; Sarah Bingham (second from right) earned her MA in English and linguistics at the University of Memphis. They will all teach first-year students in our Composition program.

New Teaching Assistants
We also have twelve new teaching assistants. The back row (left to right) features Katie Salter, Josiah Meints, Raquel Hollinsworth, Chelsea Henshaw, Alice Gill, and Kris Robinson; the front row features Emily Mills, Ja’Net Blackmon, Amanda Patterson, Amanda Philley, Neelie Owen, and Christina Collins.
Over the last four years, we have asked our graduating seniors to submit a portfolio of their work in English at MSU. We also asked them to attend an exit interview with faculty members of our assessment committee, and then to fill out an exit survey on the major.

This three-part assessment plan has already enriched our BA program. For instance, majors may now elect a junior-level course called “Writing for the Workplace”; another junior-level course called “Selected Authors,” which will focus this spring semester on Toni Morrison; and a one-hour course required of all majors, “English Studies,” which introduces our students to the major and to the profession. Dr. Kelly Marsh currently teaches the course. Then next fall, rising seniors will take another one-hour course, this one focused on reflective writing and professional portfolios.

Additionally, in the spring semester of 2008, we implemented an assessment plan focused on the MA program. Devised by the graduate faculty and our director, Dr. Richard Patteson, this plan draws data from results on the MA examination and from a new exit survey. Results from the first and second administrations of the survey suggest that our MA graduates love the program and its faculty.

Specifically, among our MA graduates from 2009, thirty-five percent “strongly agreed” and fifty-nine percent “agreed” that the program prepared them well to analyze and interpret English and American literature. Students also praised the program for making them effective literary researchers. Indeed, fifty-nine percent “strongly agreed” and thirty-five percent “agreed” that they had learned to use library resources effectively and to document primary and secondary sources correctly and ethically.

Just as encouraging, seventy percent “strongly agreed” and twenty-four percent “agreed” that the program improved their writing skills.

We happily report, too, that results on the MA examination have improved. Two years ago, we set a benchmark that 75% of the graduates will be able to write “satisfactory” or “excellent” essays on the MA exam. In 2008 the graduate faculty found that only 70% of last year’s graduates met these standards; however, in 2009, the pass rate rose to 78%.

While this improvement pleases us, we want to generate more than pass-fail data from the MA examination itself. Therefore, we have recently devised a rating sheet. Keyed to the rubric for evaluating the four essays on the exam, the rating sheet will allow us to determine areas of strength and weakness among these criteria: knowledge of field, effective thesis statements, insightful analysis, clear organization, and correctness. We will implement the rating sheet in the spring 2010 semester.

Under the leadership of Director of Composition, Ann Spurlock, we have also begun assessing our Composition Program by administering pre- and post-essay examinations for students enrolled in Comp I and II. Next year, I’ll report those results.

Rich Raymond,
Department Head
Southern Literary Journal will soon publish Dr. Ted Atkinson’s article “Hellbound on His Trail: Faulknerian Blood-guilt and the Traumatized Form of Lewis Nordan’s Wolf Whistle.”


The Journal of the Short Story in English will soon publish Dr. Greg Bentley’s “A Journey into the Bizarre/Bizaar: Time and Subjectivity in James Joyce’s ‘Araby.’”

Studies in English Literature will soon publish Dr. Shalyn Claggett’s article “George Eliot’s Interrogation of Physiological Future Knowledge.”

Dr. Susan Cook, one of our lecturers, contributes regularly to the Historical Novel Society Review.

Dr. Pat Creevy continues his book project on the poetry of William Wordsworth.


The spring edition of English Literary History will publish Dr. Peter DeGabriele’s article on “Intimacy, Survival, and Resistance: Daniel Defoe’s A Journal of the Plague Year.”

Dr. Lara Dodds published an article on Paradise Lost in Milton Studies. Also, English Literary Renaissance will soon publish her “Reading and Writing in Sociable Letters; Or, How Margaret Cavendish Reads Her Plutarch.”

Eastern Washington University Press will soon publish Becky Hagenston’s collection of stories titled Strange Weather. She also published “Alice versus Dorothy” in The Versus Anthology and “Anthony” in The Surreal South.

Dr. Shirley Hanshaw’s article “Refusal to be Can(n)on Fodder” appeared in Thirty Years After: New Essays on Vietnam.

Lecturer Peter Olson received the Scharff English Graduate Award at the University of Memphis. He also published biographical pieces for the Encyclopedia of Alabama and continued work on his dissertation on “The Politics of Transatlantic Originality: Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, and Elizabeth Stoddard’s Dark Passages.”

Dr. Holly Johnson’s article “A Fifteenth-Century Sermon Enacts the Seven Deadly Sins,” will soon appear in a collection of essays, Sin and its Cultural Place in the West. Also, her essay on “God’s Music-Making: The Cross-Harp Metaphor in Late Medieval Preaching” will reach print soon, as will her book-length manuscript, The Grammar of Good Friday: Macaronic Sermons of Late Medieval England. (continued)

Dr. Matt Little published “An Approach to Thoreau’s ‘Economy’” in *Pedagogy*.


Dr. Kelly Marsh published “The Mother’s Innarratable Pleasure and the Submerged Plot of Persuasion” in *Narrative*.

Dr. Tennyson O’Donnell continues work on three articles, one on teaching literary research as a rhetorician, one on discourse analysis, another on writing centers.


*Indiana Review* published two poems by Dr. Catherine Pierce: “Dear Atom Bomb” and “Emergence.” Additionally, *The Next of Us Is About to be Born: The Wick Poetry Series Anthology* reprinted three of her poems, and she has three more poems forthcoming.

Dr. Richard Patteson will soon publish *The Fiction of Robert Antoni: Writing in the Estuary*.

Dr. Ginger Pizer has edited *Child-Directed Signing* and submitted it for publication.

*Teaching English in the Two-Year College* will soon publish “Re-Placing Lit in Comp II: Pragmatic and Humanistic Benefits” by Dr. Rich Raymond.


Dr. Robert West published six poems, two in *Southern Poetry Review*, one in *Tar River Poetry*, and three in *Able Muse*. He also continues his work on an edition of the complete poetry of A. R. Ammons, which will be published by W. W. Norton. Additionally, Dr. West received the Humanities Teacher of 2009 Award.

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Although I have taken on some freelance editing jobs and analyzed writing samples for linguistic research since I have completed my degree, I am primarily working as an adjunct composition instructor at Calhoun Community College, the largest community college in the nation. I am spending the rest of my time watching, teaching, and learning with my one-year-old son.

Majoring in English has been vital to my success as a composition instructor. No other discipline would have offered me so many opportunities to improve my own composition and research skills. Additionally, my English major presented me with the opportunity to explore the evolution of my own language, giving me the ability to offer my students a unique perspective on grammar.

My time as a graduate student in MSU’s English department transformed me into a disciplined student, capable writer, and thorough researcher. Upon entering MSU’s graduate program, I had never had to manage my time well in order to accomplish my tasks. The rigorous courses soon taught me to schedule time for reading, writing, and research. My courses also taught me how to analyze arguments and, in doing so, how to frame my own ideas into a coherent and strongly supported whole. As a composition instructor, I see many grammatical errors every day, but my time as an English major trained me to avoid those and become a more credible writer as a result. Finally, I am grateful for the research skills that I acquired during my time in the English department. I began as a student with vague ideas of how to arrive at important research questions and how to find sources to support those and became a capable researcher. All of these skills are essential as I instruct writers of varying skill levels. (continued)
In Their Own Words: Brandi Williams (continued)

Although I had many formative moments during my time at MSU, some of the most profound instances occurred during my linguistics courses because they shaped my understanding of language evolution, an understanding that is crucial for my success as a composition teacher. My students often wonder why some of English’s grammar rules exist, and now I have answers to those questions. I can also understand why my students adopt some nonstandard grammar rules in their writing, and because I understand how they arrive at those forms, I can get them to adopt standard rules more readily. Thus, my linguistic education has shaped me into a more open-minded, understanding teacher.

I am uncertain where I might be in the next five years, but I am currently contemplating getting my Master’s degree in Education along with completing some of my foreign language minors. With this combination, I will be a competitive candidate for a variety of teaching positions from junior high English or high school German teacher to freshman composition instructor.

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Kudos for our Students

Seniors Molly Hartzog and Rachael Loftin and MA students Raquel Hollingsworth and Ja’Net Blackmon won the Howell H. Gwin Memorial Scholarship.

Kiley Sullivan and Diamond Maxwell won the William H. Magruder Scholarship.

MA students Misty Smith and Raquel Hollingsworth and senior Lisa McMurtray won the Eugene Butler Creative Writing Award.

Elizabeth Teeple received the Peyton Ward Williams Distinguished Writing Award.

Josiah Meintz won the Linda Brasher/Mary Ann Dazey Award for the best essay written in Advanced Composition.

Rachael Loftin won the Lewis and Betty Noland Book Award.


Research Assistants Brandi Williams, Abigail Vol- ler, and Jessica Mann made significant contributions to one of Dr. Crossley’s publications in Language Testing.

Leslie Adams, MA, has excelled in her creative writing PhD program at the University of Illinois.

Misty Jameson, MA, earned her PhD at the University of Georgia and now serves as an assistant professor at Lander University.

Lynn Mullen, BA, pursues her master’s degree in communication at Auburn University.

Ester Neal, BA, received her MBA at MSU and works now as a research analyst in Huntsville, Alabama.

James Redd, MA and current lecturer, will begin his PhD studies in the fall at the University of Nebraska.
**Kudos (continued)**

**Andy Black**, BA, received his MA in Medieval Studies at the University of Memphis. He has also begun PhD studies at the University of Maryland.

**Laurie Buchholz**, MA, serves as Director of the Study Skills Center at Monterey Peninsula College.

**Tiffany Love Curtis**, MA, pursues the PhD in English and creative writing at the University of Southern Mississippi.

**Wesley Venus**, MA, received his PhD in English from the University of Georgia.

**Michael Shelton**, MA, teaches English at Hebron Christian School. He also serves as president of the Mississippi Poetry Society.

**Kathy Ward Shields**, BA, completed her MS in Library and Information Science at the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

**Emily Stinson**, MA, pursues her PhD in literature and creative writing at Western Michigan University.

**Angela Taylor Brewer**, BA, received her MS at MSU and now serves as an assistant editor at McGraw-Hill.

**Alexis Powe**, BA, earned her MA at LSU, served as lecturer in our department and as an instructor in technical communication for MSU’s College of Engineering. After teaching English in Korea, she now serves as an instructor and coordinator in the Office of International Education.

**Susan Walker**, BA, earned her Juris Doctor degree at St. Louis University and now practices law in St. Louis.

**Shannon Brewer**, BA, earned her law degree at the University Florida and now practices law in Orlando.

**Beth Clayton Luthye**, BA, earned her MA at Florida State University and taught writing in Tennessee. Currently, she works as compassionate ministries coordinator for a faith-based organization that provides aid for people in the Caribbean.

Our Xi Kappa chapter of the English honorary society, Sigma Tau Delta, has inducted four new members. Led by president **Lauren Shook** and by advisor **Dr. Michael Kardos**, STD has continued its sponsored of creative writing and readings; they have also gathered and donated clothes and supplies for Safe Haven and donated books to the Starkville Public Library.

Our Graduate Students at the Fall 2009 T.A. Workshop
In the spring of 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009, I mailed our newsletters to all BA and MA grads from MSU’s Department of English; these alumni also received a request for a donation to help support our programs, faculty, and students.

To date, our generous alumni have responded to this request for financial support with donations totaling over $14,000 for the English Advancement Fund, which supports the travel and equipment needs of faculty and graduate students.

The generosity of our alumini has also allowed us to enrich the Helen W. Skelton Scholarship and the Robert B. Holland Fund as well as the Ann Pittman Andrews Memorial Scholarship, the Linda Brasher/Mary Ann Daze Memorial Scholarship, and the new Al Camus Award in Creative Writing. Their kindness has also allowed us to attach a handsome supplemental check to each of the certificates received by students who won the scholarships and writing contests, listed above. On behalf of the students and my colleagues, I say thank you!

With hearty gratitude and pride we list here our most recent donors: Mr. Robert J. Allen; Dr. C. Hunter Andrews; Mr. Philip J. Betbeze; Ms. Andrea Boone; Drs. Grace and Dean Boswell, Jr.; Dr. Thomas P. Caldwell; Dr. and Mrs. R. D. Boswell, Jr.; Mr. and Mrs. Tommie S. Cardin; Dr. Joseph E. Carrithers; Mrs. Barbara H. Criswell; Dr. and Mrs. John D. Davis, IV; Mrs. Elizabeth Gwin; Mrs. Barbara J. L. Hamilton; Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Harding; Drs. E. O. and Elizabeth Hawkins; Ms. Susanne L. Hicks; Mr. Ledon Hitch and Ms. Marha F. Barnett; Dr. V. Melissa Holland; Ms. Donna L. Holton; the Ireland Family Partnership; Mr. Andy Johnson and Ms. Elizabeth Trevathan; Mrs. Rebecca Harbor Jones; Ms. Margaret E. Molpus; Mr. R. David Murrell; Mr. and Mrs. Millard M. Kopp; Dr. and Mrs. James D. Land; Mr. and Mrs. Stanley S. Owen; Mr. Sank Owen; Mr. and Mrs. F. Ralph Owens; Ms. Lydia Roberts; Ms. Josie S. Shumake; Mr. and Mrs. Judd Skelton; Dr. Frank J. Whittington; Ms. Ida H. Wilkerson; Mrs. Jerry T. Williams; Ms. Mary M. Williford.

Of course, our needs continue to grow. In addition to supporting our writing contests, we need further support for scholarships, for faculty travel, and for departmental equipment, especially for our Clyde Williams Film Room and our Writing Center.

If you’re interested in making a tax-deductible donation to help us to meet these needs, please contact Rob Jenkins, Director of Development at MSU. You can reach Mr. Jenkins at 662-325-6762, or at rjenkins@foundation.msstate.edu. You may also click on “opportunities for donors” on our departmental website: http://www.msstate.edu/dept/english