

English Department Newsletter

Wake Forest University

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The Creative Gap

Before I came to Wake Forest, I considered myself a creative writer. Now as a senior, I find I've become a literary analyst and a journalist with a much-neglected creative writing hobby.

I am grateful for my background in literature. Without reading the works of great writers, my sources of inspiration would not have been opened up in so many new ways.

But, like me, many English majors wish they could have mixed more creativity into their curriculum. Divisional, major and minor requirements often make this difficult.

Creative writing, however, is not just a casualty of students' hectic schedules. Creative writing is undervalued in the English department.

Dr. Eric Wilson, department chair, says he would like to see a Creative Writing minor formed in order to "formalize

the requirements" for students and "identify creative writers within the department" by giving them more "visibility and clout."

Presently, no more than two advanced writing courses may be counted toward the major. And the 200-level Poetry and Short Story Workshops, prerequisites for the upper-level writings classes, do not count toward the major—they are considered general electives.

"I feel like I work just as hard in this class as in my other classes, but I don't get credit for it," said junior, Danielle Pavella, of the 200-level poetry class.

"The fact that the courses don't count discourages English majors from taking them," says Professor John McNally, who teaches the Short Story Workshop. For the past three years, McNally has suggested to the curriculum committee that the

200-level fiction writing course count toward the major.

As to the importance of creative writing in students' lives, I believe the exploration of self and the development of personal style involved in the creative writing process is invaluable.

It is true that "creative writing" is not the only outlet where one can be creative. There are ways to integrate creativity into literature analysis, hard news stories, media releases and more. But what about writing to fulfill one's own creative impulses?

Perhaps faculty members, all of whom have achieved either their master's degree or a PhD, view an undergraduate degree as only the first step in education. But for many students like myself, the undergraduate degree is the final step in our formal education. If we don't get something here, we don't get it at all. (see page 5)

A Visit from Journalist Kathleen Parker

Acclaimed journalist Kathleen Parker has worked for five newspapers and contributed to 325 magazines and newspapers combined during her 26 years as a journalist. On the road to becoming a columnist, she's done it all: crime reporting, city council coverage, local feature stories and more. But she's never taken a single journalism course.

"I never went to journalism school," Parker commented before her lecture for faculty

and students on Feb. 22. "I never took a single writing class. I probably should have," she added jokingly.

At age 25, Parker was pursuing her doctorate in Spanish literature at Florida State University, where she also obtained her Masters. "I was just one quarter and a dissertation shy of completing the PhD when I bolted," Parker said. "I realized all I was qualified to do was to turn around and regurgitate every-

thing I had learned."

A sympathetic professor told her, "Go out and do something creative." So in 1976, Parker borrowed \$3,000 from a local bank. With no precise plans except visions of sleeping in a large blue tent, she headed north on I-95 toward Charleston, S.C. She pitched the tent in her cousin's yard and began looking for jobs.

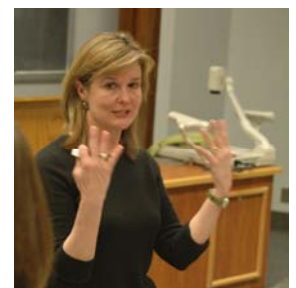
A friend told Parker that, as a writer fluent (see page 5)

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Journalist Kathleen Parker speaks to Wake Forest students.



2004 English Grads (61 total)

39% were working
(13% teaching)
25% in graduate school
10% still job seeking
26% did not respond

2003 English Grads (47 total)

38% were working
(11% teaching)
34% in graduate school
2% still job seeking
26% did not respond

2002 English Grads (54 total)

39% were working
(6% teaching)
22% in graduate school
2% still job seeking
37% did not respond

*Figures rounded to the nearest whole number.

English Graduate Statistics:

They've studied Shakespeare, Austen, Milton, Hawthorne, Dante and more. They've toiled for hours writing and rewriting countless papers. They've grown from like to love to true appreciation for literature. But after graduation, what will English majors do? The following are jobs, in no particular order, which English graduates from the past three years (2002-04) have taken:

Research	Human Resources
Marketing	Healthcare
Editorial	Graphic Design
Teaching	Analysis
Publishing	Paralegal
Reporting	Politics
Management	<i>and more...</i>

Surveys were issued by Career Services to all English majors within six months of May graduation. Graduate school figures include law school and other grad programs.

Alumni Updates

N.W. "Red" Pope '53 works in advertising and bank marketing, 52 years running. He sends his regards to an English department much unlike the one where he studied at Wake Forest College.

Lee Anglin '56 served as a pastor for 40-plus years. He now works as a Yellowstone Park guide and lives with his wife, Carol, in Gardiner, MT.

Dr. Ray W. Benfield '59 retired after 55 years as a pastor in Winston-Salem.

Vicki Tolar Burton '67 is an Associate Professor of English and Director of the Writing Intensive Curriculum at Oregon State University.

Karen Paige Kroncke '73, MA Ed Counseling '77, resigned after 15 years as Director of College Counseling at Forsyth Country Day to join husband Jim, MBA '76, in Kroncke Consulting.

D. Quincy Whitney '74, former *Boston Globe* journalist of 14 years, secured two 6-month fellowships in the Musical Instruments Dept. of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC.

Jane Thompson Rae '75 teaches high school English in Hockessin, Del. She studied Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon under a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship.

Mike Tuggle, MA '77, published *Southern Partisan* magazine articles, *Charlotte Observer* guest editorials and his first book, *Confederates in the Boardroom*. He lives in Charlotte.

Betty Jo Zimmerman Ross '79 works at RehabCare, a healthcare provider, in Oklahoma City.

Catherine Burroughs '80 is a Professor of English at Wells College in Aurora, NY.

David Cantrell '83 is a postdoctoral English fellow at the University of Nevada.

Raye Shoemaker Varney '86 is Managing Director at 7 Stages Theatre, Atlanta, a 25-year old professional theater that focuses on new and experimental work.



A Farewell from Dr. Evie Shockley

As Dr. Evie Shockley prepares to leave Wake Forest, she is excited for her journey ahead but also regrets leaving the English faculty and students whom she has come to know and respect during her time here.

Shockley has accepted a position in the English department at Rutgers University at the main campus in New Brunswick/ Piscataway, NJ. She looks forward to teaching black literature, a genre that encompasses African-American, native African, Caribbean, black British and even black Canadian literature. She hopes to teach courses with a “diasporic focus.”

She will also be teaching creative writing and working toward developing a creative writing minor and possibly a major at Rutgers.

Shockley is eager to study with senior scholars and mentors like Dr. Cheryl Wall, a prominent figure in studies of the black female literary tradition as well as women of the Harlem Renaissance.

She says she is looking forward to her

move to a bigger, more diverse state university where she will also have the opportunity to teach PhD’s.

Shockley calls her farewell “bittersweet.” “I feel closely connected to the students and faculty,” she says. “I am grateful that my first job was at a small institution.” She says she has also “thoroughly enjoyed the students” and how “responsive” they were in her classes, which in turn made her courses rewarding.

In parting, Shockley hopes the English faculty will reevaluate the “narrow box the department has staked out” for requirements in order to encourage students to take creative writing classes and also “non-traditional literature,” or non-British and American literature. “It’s important for students to gain a larger sense of the world,” she says.

Shockley asks that students and faculty keep in touch in the future. Look her up on <http://english.rutgers.edu>.



Dr. Evie Shockley, Assistant Professor of English

Greetings from Abroad

From Mary DeShazer, Professor of English and Women’s Studies:

Living in London has been a marvelous experience for me and the 15 students at Worrell House. I am teaching “English Dramatic Literature and the London Theatre,” which emphasizes weekly attendance at theatrical productions. Highlights include Simon Russell Beale’s riveting performance as Macbeth at the Almeida Theatre and a hilarious revision of J. M. Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* entitled *The Playboy of the West Indies*, by British-Trinidadian playwright Mustapha Matura at the Tricycle Theatre. We also enjoyed two lively productions at Stratford-upon-Avon: *Julius Caesar* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

For my other course, “The Spirit of Place in British Literature,” we traveled to Wordsworth’s home in Grasmere and Virginia Woolf’s home in Sussex. Our group’s day trip to Bath in search of Jane Austen was a high point of the course; indeed, we found traces of her everywhere. After stopping for afternoon

tea in the Pump Room, where Catherine Morland and her friends gathered to socialize in *Northanger Abbey*, we toured the intriguing remains of the Roman baths.

I hope my endorsement of the pleasures of spending a semester in London will encourage other faculty and students to apply to the Worrell House program. Warm greetings to all from a cold but happy Anglophile!

From James Hans, Professor of English:

As for Venice, it would be impossible to avoid the clichéd vision of things in a short space. I would end up with something like this: We have been enjoying the traditional delights of Venice, from the canals and churches and the great paintings of Bellini, Titian and Tintoretto to gelato and long walks on crooked streets that lead nowhere. We visited Florence and Rome together, have taken many trips separately, and now that the weather has warmed up, we listen every day to the songs of the gondoliers on the Grand Canal.

“Our group’s day trip to Bath in search of Jane Austen was a high point of the course; indeed, we found traces of her everywhere.”



Alumni Updates *(continued from page 2)*

Mike Lyle, MA '86, is publishing a book of stories from his 23 years as a United Methodist Pastor called *Gathered Stones*, out in May.

Eugenia Maish '88 works in Planned Giving at The Ohio State University.

Lorna Campbell Martin '89 teaches AP and IB English at Pinecrest High School in Pinehurst, NC.

Thomas C. Caves, Jr. '92 writes grants for the N.C. State Highway Patrol in Raleigh.

Joe Landreau '93 teaches at Dutch Fork High School in Irmo, S.C.

Eric Joseph Taylor '94 graduated with honors from Rutgers University School of Law '04 and clerks for the Honorable William J. Cook, a criminal law judge in Camden, NJ.

L. Kathleen "Kat" Jaske '95 published her first novel *For Honor* in 2004. Her second, *Gambit for Love of a Queen*, comes out April, 2005.

Elizabeth Lang Deuer '96, a Cincinnati English teacher, made Who's Who Among American High School Teachers three years in a row. She is finishing her Masters in Teaching at Miami University, Oxford.

June Turner-Piscitelli, MA '97, is an instructor in literature at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton.

Frank Byrns '98 published his first book, *My Father's Son and Other Super!!Stories!!*, in Dec.

Jennifer Blevins '00 works at Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, *Weddings* magazine. She lives in NYC with her husband.

Timothy Lee West, MA '00, is finishing an MA in Biblical Studies at Lipscomb University and is an editor in Academic & Professional Books at Abingdon Press.

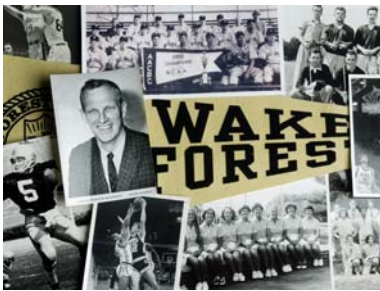
Sean Jenkins '01 is earning his PhD in Higher Education Administration at the University of Virginia.

Greg Langsdale '02 will graduate from the George Washington University Law School '05. He was an editor of *The George Washington Law Review*.

Theresa Felder '02 is studying Journalism at the University of Galway in Ireland.

Swell Armstrong '04 teaches 10th-grade English at Leander High School in Austin, TX.

Contributions to the Edwin Wilson Chair in British Literature fund may be sent to: Ms. Cameron Meador, University Advancement, Wake Forest U., PO Box 7227, Winston-Salem, NC 27109.



To current and former Majors,
to old and new friends: "Do let us
know what significant events
have taken place in your life."

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We also welcome comments and
suggestions for the newsletter.
Don't forget to include your full
name and graduation year!

(“The Creative Gap” cont. from page 1)

So it is for Natalie Bonomo, a Presidential Scholar in fiction writing. “I thought there were not nearly enough creative writing courses,” she said. “I was really disappointed with this.”

McNally also wishes the department could offer more writing classes. “There’s definitely interest in it,” he said. “I had a waiting list of at least 30 students. I could have filled an entire other course.” McNally says offering more classes, including creative fiction, non-fiction and even screenwriting, would not only be beneficial to English majors, but would also draw more students into the department.

Dr. Wilson looks forward to next year when husband-and-wife poets from Ireland will be team-teaching and arranging readings. Connor O’Callaghan and Vona Groarke have been hired as two-year visiting poets beginning this coming fall. But Dr. Wilson noted that “institutional and financial constraints” prevent the department from hiring any more creative writing teachers at present.

He praised the department’s “vibrant and full reading series” of poets and novelists, as well as the presence of the WFU Irish Press and the annual Irish Festival, all of which help generate enthusiasm for the poetic and creative community.

Professor Dennis Sampson, who teaches poetry, would like to hear more contemporary voices. There are very few classes which include contemporary poetry and fiction in their syllabi—but creative writing classes do.

Professor Bill Moss said the English department needs to wait on a university-wide vote before making any decisions. “At present,” he said, “a proposal for radical restructuring of the university’s core curriculum has been brought to the faculty by the Committee on Academic Planning,” which will be voted on next year. “Should this proposal or some modification of it be adopted by the faculty, it could have a considerable effect on both lower- and upper-division English requirements and offerings,” he said.

“We need to strengthen the present writing program before considering instituting a minor,” Moss said. “With the addition to the faculty of Professor McNally and the hiring of a new poet in residence, we may be moving in that direction.”

There is a place for creativity at Wake Forest. Hopefully Wake, which nurtures independent thinking throughout the campus, will come to nurture the imagination—which I think is just as sure a path to independent thinking as it is to individuality.

Though I will be graduating in May, I leave hoping that future students can look forward to more creative writing courses in the future.

(“A Visit from Journalist Kathleen Parker” cont. from page 1)

in Spanish, she should apply for a job at the *Charleston Evening Post* which also owned *The Buenos Aires Herald*. Parker described her “initiation by fire” in the real world of journalism.

“Neither hard news nor criticism suited me,” Parker explained, “but I had to struggle to liberate myself from the rules and regs of my training. That said, I’m grateful for all that training. You have to learn the rules before you can break them.”

“Finding my voice was the toughest part once I entered journalism,” she said. “I was a pretty solid prose stylist thanks to all those college papers, but daily deadlines ultimately did me the most good. When you have a deadline looming, just a few hours to get something written, you don’t have time for the second-guessing and self-recrimination that inhibit all those folks out there who ‘wish’ they could be writers.”

By 1987, when she began her twice-weekly column for *The Orlando Sentinel*, which now appears in *USA Today* and numerous other newspapers nationwide, Parker had honed what her editor called the “Parker cutesy” style, her unique mix of wit and humor. Her column’s popularity depends largely upon Parker’s down-to-earth ability to touch on readers’ many emotions.

“We have this notion that to be ‘smart,’ we have to be aloof, one eyebrow raised, teeth clenched, emotion-free, above it all,” Parker said. “Nothing bores me more. No passion in the writer, no passion in the reader. Me? I like to get in the middle of it. I like to get my hands dirty. Thus, my column is very personality driven. Readers know that I’m fully present.”

Parker told her audience: “Do the thing you love. You’ll be good at it and you’ll be rewarded for it.”

“I thought there were not nearly enough creative writing courses,” said Presidential Fiction Writing Scholar Natalie Bonomo. “I was really disappointed with this.”



“You have to learn the rules before you can break them,” said Kathleen Parker.



Pro Humanitate

Wake Forest University

English Department
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Senior English Majors Thank the Department

“The English major has helped me improve my writing and editing skills tremendously,” said Jane Bianchi. “Although it is not the most practical major, unless you are getting your PhD in literature, it has made me more cultured and more generally knowledgeable.” Jane plans to get an entry-level editorial position at a magazine.

Mark Holt said: “While I am not pursuing a career based in my major, I chose English because it is something that I love and I thank the Wake Forest English department and faculty for aiding me in pursuing one of my passions, and for preparing me for another.” He will apply to Virginia Commonwealth University Ad Center graduate school in Richmond.

“I think that the English major has definitely helped in terms of big picture thinking skills and distilling complex issues into components,” said Craig Moyer. “I’m glad the professors were hard on me,” he added, “because I learned to really refine my thinking and writing.”

Stephanie Hill said the English major “has taught me critical thinking, writing and communication skills that will be valuable no matter what I end up doing.” She will join the Teach for America Corps in New York City and hopes to attend law school.

Natalie Bonomo said: “Being an English major was beneficial in the sense that I received a broad and in-depth background in literature, which I think is really valuable.” Next year she’ll be going to graduate school to get a Masters in Middle Eastern Studies.

A Letter from the Department Chair

Dear Friends,

I am sad to report what many of you probably already know: Bashir El-Beshti, one of our most esteemed and beloved department members, passed away this past semester. Bashir was a truly generous, gentle soul as well as a distinguished teacher and scholar. We all miss him terribly.

Our department has undertaken two initiatives to remember Bashir. First of all, we recently inaugurated the Bashir El-Beshti Award in Renaissance Studies. This award will be given in the spring of every year to a student who has shown excellence in Bashir's field of study. Secondly, we have established a fund for the four children Bashir left behind.

If you wish to contribute to the fund, please make checks out to: WFU Memorial Fund for Bashir El-Beshti. Checks should be sent to: Eric Wilson, Chair, Committee for the El-Beshti Memorial Fund, English Department, P.O. Box 7387, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC 27109.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Eric G. Wilson

