



NOTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Greetings from the Department of English! This year has seen a number of changes and additions to programs within the department.

We welcome Laura Aull as a new tenure-track assistant professor who specializes in the teaching of writing and in research in the field of corpus linguistics — the digital study of patterns and word choices in large comparative bodies of texts. Laura joins us with a PhD from the University of Michigan and will be an integral part of the new college Writing Program as it enters its second year.

Justin Catanoso, long a familiar face to Journalism students in the department, also joins us this year as a full time Senior Lecturer and the new director of the Journalism Program, which was previously directed by Wayne King who retired last spring. Justin brings with him a wealth of experience as a business journalist in the Triad area, and will be helping reshape the Journalism program for the 21st century.

Because writing in all of its forms has an increasing role in the department, this issue of the newsletter focuses on various forms of writing in the department and at the college, from the Irish poetry published by the Wake Forest University Press to Words Awake, an event planned for March, 2012, to honor writers with Wake Forest connections. But much else has been happening besides. The Medieval Studies program co-sponsored a performance of Beowulf by Benjamin Bagby in coordination with the Secret Series, and this term we've had guest lectures by Andrzej Gasiorek of the University of Birmingham, Martin Puchner of Harvard University, Jonathan Boyarin of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a poetry reading by former department member and current Rutgers faculty member, Evie Shockley.

We also sadly announce the death of long-time department member Alan Mandelbaum, whose translations of Dante and Virgil made the Wake Forest English department known throughout the English-speaking world. All of us who teach and write about literature aspire to have the kind of impact he had on generations of students and scholars.

Best Wishes,

Scott L. Klein
Associate Professor and Chair

BRINGING THE WRITTEN WORD TO WAKE IN SPRING 2012

Ellie Thiemann | Class of 2014

The university will host the first ever Wake Forest writer's conference and symposium on campus from March 23-25, 2012 to celebrate the achievements of our alumni.

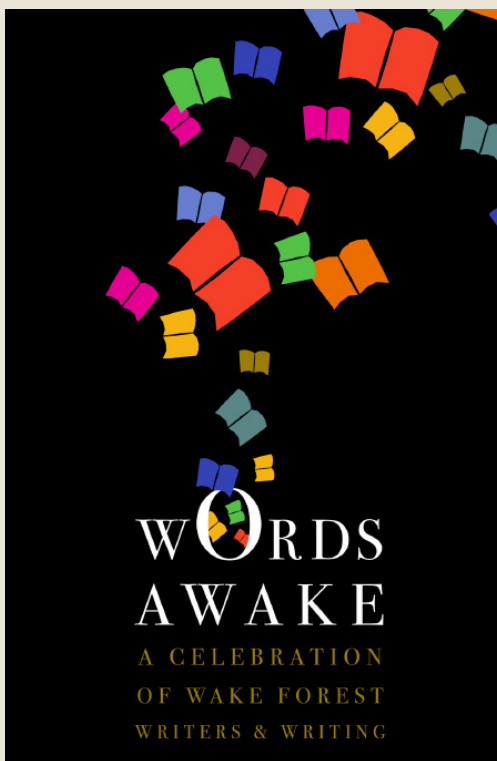
The conference, called "Words Awake: A Celebration of Wake Forest Writers & Writing", will bring over 50 Wake Forest alumni to campus to participate in workshops and panel discussions with students and faculty.

Wake Forest is incorporating "Words Awake" as a way to begin to integrate more writing into the curriculum campus-wide. A new Creative Writing Minor is now offered through the English Department with courses which focus on writing for and across specific disciplines such as medicine and business.

Tom Phillips, the Director of the Wake Forest Scholars Program and Interim Director of the Program in Interdisciplinary Humanities, spearheaded the planning committee for this event, saying hosting a celebration like this has been a dream of his. "This will be the first event like this on campus to recognize the many achievements of our alumni," he said.

He hopes that students will take advantage of the many amazing opportunities the weekend will offer. Phillips stresses that this event is not just for English and journalism-focused students: "Words Awake is a celebration of the written word through the lens of Wake Forest alumni," he said.

The planning committee, which is made up of Phillips, Ann Boyle, Phoebe Zerwick, Maria Henson, Mary Beth Wallace, Mary Martin Niepold, and a network of alumni, has been working for over a



Community Outreach as part of Words Awake

Ellie Thiemann | Class of 2014

In March, as part of the "Words Awake" conference, Wake Forest will be sending alumni authors and writers to local schools as part of a new community outreach program designed to give young, public school students contact with notable Wake Forest alumni who work in all different areas of writing and publishing.

On Friday, March 23, Wake alumni will be visiting nine different public schools in the Winston-Salem area to hold workshops and work with the students. Some authors will be working directly with students in small groups, while others will give school-wide talks. The students, who range from kindergarten to high school age, will interact directly with authors and have the opportunity to listen to their talks.

Phoebe Zerwick, a lecturer in the English Department and a professor of journalism, explained that the highlight of the program will be giving local students, who may not have much exposure to writing, direct and intimate exposure to authors.

The planning committee has worked hard to tailor each author's visit to the needs of the school they will be visiting. Old Town Elementary

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year to ensure the success of the event, which will be promoted regionally as well as locally.

To kick off the celebration on Friday, March 23, visiting authors will visit local elementary and high schools to work with students. On Friday evening, Tom Hayes ('79) will premiere a documentary about his father, Harold Hayes ('48), often called "the main architect of the New Journalism movement," and the groundbreaking former editor of *Esquire* magazine.

The weekend will continue on Saturday with panel discussions involving alumni and current Wake professors. Throughout the day, 16 different conversations will take place, each offering a unique topic and panel of writers. Words Awake boasts an impressive lineup of authors, including Laura Elliott ('79), author of the critically-acclaimed novel *Under a War Torn Sky*; Matt Gallagher ('05), soldier and author of *Kaboom*, and Jane Bianchi ('05), former senior editor at *Seventeen* magazine.

The panel discussion topics vary widely—the day begins a symposium called "Writing a Dangerous World," ends with a discussion of writing and editing careers in and around North Carolina, and covers everything from sports reporting, screenplay writing, writing for young adults, and writing news for Washington.

Saturday, the last full day of the conference, will conclude with one of the many highlights of the weekend, a ceremony honoring 15 Wake Forest alumni authors who will be inducted into the Wake Forest Writer's Hall of Fame. Maya Angelou is among the honored and will be performing a reading of her work.

The weekend will close with a brunch Sunday morning, cleverly called a "Pastry Slam", where students can come speak to the authors about their work and questions raised during the weekend over a light breakfast.

For Phillips, "Words Awake" epitomizes how "Wake Forest engages the world in a humanitarian way," and will be an amazing opportunity for current students and faculty to gain intimate exposure to some of the most influential authors of the twentieth and twenty-first century.

The planning committee is looking for student volunteers to serve as escorts for the visiting authors while they are on campus. For more information contact Hannah Kay Hunt at hunthk8@wfu.edu.

School has a rich culture of poetry already embedded into the school's curriculum and surrounding community, so the "Words Awake" program will be sending a poet to the school to hold a workshop about reading and writing poetry as a special event for young students.

The planning committee has also been working with the career center at the vocational school in Winston-Salem to arrange for Elizabeth Norfleet, a alumnae and author of the acclaimed cooking book, *The Seasonal Palette*, to giving cooking classes to the students and offer them advice about the art of culinary writing.

Anne Boyle, another member of the planning committee, is collaborating with Northwest Middle School to integrate Wake Forest authors into the school's English curriculum. This event is of special importance to this school, as it will bring the authors of the books that students are studying directly into their classrooms.

Zerwick also expresses her excitement about the possibilities this event offers Wake alumni, students, and the greater Winston-Salem community in the future. "'Words Awake' will hopefully become an annual event... a celebration as opposed to just a conference," Zerwick, who wrote for the *Winston-Salem Journal* for nearly 20 years, said.

She noted that Wake Forest has much to offer the surrounding area and that this project, "fits right into the University's policy of public engagement."

Ellie Thiemann is a Finance major and a journalism minor in the Wake Forest University class of 2014.

TWO VIEWS OF ENGLISH'S ROLE IN THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



Educating English in a Technology-Driven Culture

Jayne Grubbs | Class of 2001

Smart phones and laptops and Skype, OH MY! In an ever-changing world, teachers are challenged to make students see why the English language, correct grammar, and accurate punctuation are important in a world that shifts from snail mail and letter-writing to texting.

Examining Digitally-Mediated Communication — R We Rly 😊?

Tommy Murcko | Class of 2012

As we become increasingly dependent on forms mediated communication for the completion of everyday tasks – texting, social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, blogs, and email, among others – we almost unconsciously sustain and perpetuate the stirrings of language evolution. Since when was a “recent story” constituted by such events as your 1250th added “friend” Jon Doe buying an ice cream cone? When exactly did “tweet” become a word? And is it really permissible to replace “okay” with “kk” in a text message? As cynical as the tone of these questions may be, frustration with the rise in societal dependency on digitally-mediated communication in the academic community is not particularly isolated.

The dynamics of present criticism of socio-linguistic phenomena can be *perceived* on our campus as a microcosm of seemingly ageless debates on the transcendent and the pragmatic – specifically, a divide (perceived or real) between studies in the humanities and practical, action-based training for corporate life. In the professional space, writing is expected to prioritize concision and the rapid spread of information over aesthetics. Digitalization of business processes has catered to

When I was in the third grade, we had pen-pals from another school: We would send and receive letters bi-weekly with our far-away friends. In retrospect, it was an excellent exercise in not only collaboration across long distances, but also in grammar, spelling, writing, and reading. Now, to communicate with students who are in a far-away location, teachers and students use Skype and other online messaging tools. When video chatting, do students need to read what their pen pals have written, comprehend, and respond appropriately? Nope. Are they focused on correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation as they respond? No way.

The question for English educators becomes, “How do we maintain focus on these vital skills as the world shifts focus?”

Examining technology and its presence in higher education and business presents quite a contrast from the challenges I face on a daily basis regarding technology’s presence in the world of elementary schools. Elementary school students, just like all of society, are bombarded with technology from every direction. However, budgets and technology in public education settings are stagnant and even shrinking.

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to these concerns, enabling quick, data-driven communication.

I was somewhat surprised to notice, on the first day of my internship at a management consulting firm, how frequently partners emailed each other messages of five words or less – “sure thing,” or “don’t forget, meeting at 3,” to name a few examples. The corporate world prioritizes directness in the movement of information, as though language is purely transactional. If you swipe your company bank card at an ATM, assuredly you neither need nor expect the machine to ask you for cash back in metaphors. It is rational to think that digitally-mediated communication has at least enabled such language forms to be used increasingly often.

But is this phenomenon ruining the English language? That question extends to an ethical space far more profound than can be represented by the dialogic, externalized commentary provided in this discussion. I maintain that the study of language is the science, ironically, of knowing *nothingness*. We can only analyze language by using language. How can we be sure of our opinions to what language should constitute, include, exclude, and embody as it changes?

Contemporary studies have engaged a methodology called corpus linguistics, which uses online databases of spoken and print media, scholarly articles, research, and scientific publications to analyze patterns in the changes of word use and frequency over time (iteslj.org/Articles/Krieger-Corpus.html). The implications of these shifts are mostly (and, perhaps, legitimately) pragmatic to many – how is the writing proficiency of first-year students at Wake impacted by texting, for example – but I also believe that they beg language users worldwide the very questions “how,” and “why do we write?”

Tommy Murcko is an English and Business and Enterprise Management double major in the Wake Forest University class of 2012.

So the question facing elementary school educators like myself is this: How do elementary school teachers compete with an ever-changing world when budgets don’t?

I have said for years that student engagement during the school day would be much higher if I were able to have streamers and fireworks come out of my head as I flew off the ground and spun around when students got an answer right or reached the “highest level,” just like the characters in a video game do. But until that becomes a reality, teachers are faced with the daunting task of finding other ways to engage students. Working knowledge of twenty-first century skills has become vital to students’ future success, in university education and beyond. The focus in education must shift away from the final product to the process of learning. Teachers must find ways to integrate students’ real-world into the classroom.

What does this look like? Instead of giving students a multiple-choice and short answer test on a novel, the more engaging assessment for twenty-first century students is the completion of a Facebook page based on the main character in the story. Consider this: Do you know as much about a person based on their profile, status updates, who they are friends with, or what they like or comment on as you would if you received a letter from them? Definitely. In fact, the intimate details available on a Facebook page are more tell-tale than those revealed by examining what is written in a letter. Can teachers assess what students learned while reading by presenting the same types of questions in a different format? That is the challenge facing today’s teachers, no matter the level or age of the students.

Engaging students in learning the nuances and proper and creative manipulation of the English language should always be the focus, no matter how the world changes. The format may be different, but the themes should, and always will, remain the same.

Jayne Grubbs (’01) teaches academically gifted students at Caleb’s Creek Elementary School in Kernersville, NC, and was one of the recipients of the 2011 Waddill Award for Excellence in Teaching.

WAKE FOREST WOMEN'S ANTHOLOGY TOUR KICKED OFF

Emily Seibel | Class of 2013

The international launch of *The Wake Forest Book of Irish Women's Poetry*, a revised and re-designed second edition of the Irish women's poetry anthology published by the Wake Forest University Press, was held in late October. Wake Forest continued its role as the largest publisher of Irish poetry in North America with the new 658-page volume, featuring a preface by Peggy O'Brien. O'Brien was also responsible for selecting and editing all of the anthology's poems, which includes work by 16 of Ireland's most revered female poets. That same evening in October also kicked off the first leg of the Wake Forest Women's Anthology five-city American tour.

Wake Forest students, faculty, and staff, along with members of the Winston-Salem community, gathered in the WFU Welcome Center's beautiful new Kulynych Auditorium for readings by four of the poet's represented in the anthology. Caitríona O'Reilly, Rita Ann Higgins, Leontia Flynn, and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin each performed selections of their work featured in *The Wake Forest Book of Irish Women's Poetry*. The foursome remained for a book signing and mingled with the audience during a small reception following the poetry reading. A musical performance by "The Belfast Boys," Alyn Mearns and Adrian Rice, a folk-singing duo from Belfast, Ireland, was another highlight of the evening.

The first woman to read at the Wake Forest event, Caitríona O'Reilly, was born in Dublin, Ireland, and now lives in Lincoln, England. In addition to her works in the Wake Forest anthology, she has also published three volumes of her own poetry, and is currently the editor of the *Poetry Ireland Review*. Before beginning her readings to the Wake audience,



O'Reilly expressed her enthusiasm at the start of the tour, saying, "It's all very exciting because we're off on a big trip around America!" Even more exciting for Wake Forest students is that O'Reilly won't remain back in Ireland for long after the tour ends: she is teaching two classes at Wake Forest for the Spring 2012 semester as the University's poet-in-residence.

The next poet to present, Rita Ann Higgins, expressed similar sentiments as O'Reilly, saying, "It's wonderful to be invited; truly such a privilege; just fantastic; and I'm very grateful." She also touched on her appreciation of the all-female nature of the anthology, saying, "When I first started reading poetry, I thought only male poets published in anthologies! It's great to be celebrating women's poetry through this amazing anthology."

Higgins said she was enjoying the American tour for more than just the poetry: "It's so nice to be here having such beautiful weather because back at home we're in winter – well it's always winter!"

For Higgins, home is dividing her time between Galway city and Spiddal, both in Ireland. In addition to having been a writer in residence at a number of universities, she has published eight collections of

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her own poetry. Throughout the evening, Higgins kept the Wake Forest audience in stitches with both her outgoing personality and some of her more comedic poems.

Leontia Flynn, the third poet of the evening to read, definitely had the audience laughing with her comedic wit, as well. One particular poem jokingly describing her struggle to distinguish certain fruits and vegetables and had the whole audience amused at this simplistically funny line: “This is an avocado – and this is an aubergine.” Flynn, born and raised in County Down, Ireland and now living in Belfast, is a research fellow at the Seamus Heany Centre for Poetry in Belfast and has authored two volumes of poetry.

Last, but certainly not least, to read was Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin. Chuilleanáin is no stranger to Winston-Salem; she has done readings at Wake Forest before, and many of those present at the event enjoyed reuniting with her again. Though now retired, she was a member of the English Department at Trinity

College in Dublin for many years and is the author of eight volumes of poetry. Her numerous awards include, most recently, the extremely prestigious Griffin International Poetry Prize in 2010.

The poetry presented by each of these four women at the event completely captivated the audience, each doing so in completely different ways. The poems themselves encompassed every topic imaginable, from avocados and aubergines to airports and asthma. But more than just topically, the poems also greatly varied in tone; they represented a complete range of emotion in the audience. Though some were hilarious while others quite sad, all were extremely thought provoking, and it was obvious how greatly they were appreciated by the audience.

After leaving Wake Forest, the tour continued with readings by the group in Chicago, IL; Pittsburgh, PA; New York City, NY; and Berkeley, CA.

Emily Seibel is an English major and a member of the Wake Forest University class of 2013.



A NEW FIELD, A NEW DEPARTMENT

Kristin Battaglini | Class of 2013

In the face of a transformational media industry, Justin Catanoso has plans to adapt the journalism program at Wake Forest to accommodate changes in the field and to maximize student success in journalism after graduation.

The journalism minor initially appeared at Wake in 1995, but in the 16 years since that time the curriculum has remained relatively unchanged. New innovations in technology and publishing have made journalism a field where the use of modern technology in teaching is a must. Led by Professor Catanoso, the journalism department plans to modernize and expand to keep up with the ever-present digital transition in journalism.

Since 1993, Catanoso has been a visiting lecturer of journalism at Wake Forest. He received his newest titles last spring — Senior Lecturer, as well as the Program Director for journalism. In his

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new capacity as director, Catanoso intends to implement some major changes to the journalism minor with the help of his colleagues so that the curriculum can be modernized to teach new media techniques.

The standard journalism courses, which currently focus on the fundamentals of reporting and editing, will soon expand to include the skills necessary to work with modern media so that students can understand the complex interplay between old and new types of news sources. Operating and posting on a blog, fluency in social media, and recording and editing podcasts and videos are just a few of the new skills which the department plans to teach.

The department is also interested in offering more specialized classes which will correspond more specifically to student interests in business reporting, political reporting, and sports writing. Specialization will help students embarking on job searches, since, according to Professor Catanoso, “the opportunities in journalism and media are now in niches.” Specialized curriculum options will give Wake Forest students a competitive advantage when working outside of the world of undergraduate education.

The field of journalism is an interdisciplinary career choice, requiring an understanding of politics, business, economics, and other realms, and the journalism program will continue to promote interdisciplinary studies in pursuit of a minor. Courses in other departments may count towards a minor in journalism depending on the nature of the course to be cross-listed.

The journalism program will now be more strategic in qualifying a non-journalism class to count towards the minor. The number of credits required for a minor will also increase, Catanoso says. While all of these changes are contingent upon staffing and scheduling, there is no doubt that the department will soon be as modern as the field of journalism itself.

Catanoso has lived in the Triad area with his wife, musician Laurelyn Dossett, for 25 years. After

attending Penn State University for his undergraduate education, Catanoso earned his Master’s Degree from Wake Forest in 1993. Originally from New Jersey, Catanoso says that his outstanding fifth-grade teacher was influential in cultivating his love of writing, and journalism proved to be the best outlet for his craft.

Aside from teaching and writing, Professor Catanoso enjoys reading, traveling, spending time with his three daughters, and last but certainly not least, football. Catanoso plans to continue to freelance with magazines and newspapers, including the triad’s own “Business Journal”, for which he was editor for 13 years.

After his first book *My Cousin the Saint* was published in 2008, Catanoso has also decided to pursue the publishing of more books in the future.

According to Catanoso, teaching has given him a unique perspective on what young people think and what is important for students to know as they venture into life after graduation.

“Journalism is a noble profession,” he says. “Even though it seems troubling right now, it is something we need enormously in a free society.”

Hopeful for the future of journalism, Catanoso feels certain that professional reporters and editors will always be necessary. Even in a world dominated by instant gratification and micro-blogging, there will always be a place for hard news reporting. Still, the technologies of social media like Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook will continue to move forward, with or without us.

There are constant new ways of accessing and reporting information, and thanks to Catanoso and a new-and-improved journalism curriculum, Wake students will now be well-versed in using these tools in journalism.

Kristin Battaglini is a Political Science major and a member of the Wake Forest University class of 2013.