April 2011

A Note from the Chair

By Emily B. Todd, Professor and Chair

As the new department chair, I have taken great pleasure in hearing from our graduates and learning about the lives they’ve led since leaving Bates Hall. Just the other day, Robyn Gaouette (2008) e-mailed to tell me that she’s applying to law school. Last semester, I listened to Keith Leonard (2008) read his poems on an Indiana radio program I accessed online. On Facebook, I read regular posts from Jaime Gionet Leger (2004), an elementary school teacher who lives in Fitchburg, MA, and every Friday morning, I read Kristin Palpini’s (2003) Note from the Editor in Hampshire Life, the magazine of the Daily Hampshire Gazette. Perhaps the most thrilling moment, though, was meeting an alumna of our department who graduated from Westfield more than three decades ago.

Dee O’Connor (1976), director of the Long Term Care Policy Unit of the Center for Health Policy and Research at UMass Medical School, came back to campus last December for the performance of her play Talking with Dolores, a work designed to provoke discussion about aging and suicide among the elderly. On the day of the performance, Dee came early to speak with English majors about the arc of her career following her days as a student here. She shared details about her initial uncertainty about what to do with an English degree, and then she told us about how she began to get interested in the field of aging.

Her bosses quickly discovered that she could write and research (skills she had developed in her Westfield English classes), and, even though she had never taken a social work class, it turned out that she knew an awful lot about character and human relationships because she had read so many novels when she was a student here. When she was a student at Westfield, she hadn’t planned the career she ended up pursuing. But here she was, back in Bates Hall (which hadn’t changed much since her student days, she told us). And in just a few hours, her first play—bringing together her interests in aging issues and creative writing—was to be performed in the Ely black box theater.

As Dee O’Connor noted, the look of Bates Hall hasn’t changed much, but our department has undergone many changes in recent years. One big transition has been that Glen Brewster stepped down as chair last summer after six years of exemplary service to the department. Luckily for all of us, he is still as involved as he ever was—advising Sigma Tau Delta, Persona, and the English Club, as well as helping our English majors with conference papers, graduate school applications, and any other activities in which they are engaged. Even though his office is now down the hall from the main office these days, his door is, as it has always been, wide open for students and alums.

There are other changes, as well, both in our faculty and in our curriculum. We were sad to say good-bye to Delia Fisher in June, but we happily welcomed Sophia Sarigianides (PhD Teachers College, Columbia University) as the new coordinator of English Education. She is excited to build on Delia’s program development and is eager to get in touch with our alums out in the field (see the profile of Professor Sarigianides on page 4). We have also welcomed Nicole Payen (MFA, Sarah Lawrence) and Jack Christian (MFA, UMass) to the department this year. Both hold full-time temporary positions focused on teaching.

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A Superhero for Students: An Interview with Glen Brewster

BY BRITTANY BURDICK, ’11

When asked who he would be if he could be any superhero, Dr. Glen Brewster gave a chuckle and said with his slight southern accent, “I think I would be Spiderman because he has the coolest outfit.” However, if you have been an English major, or have been involved with Westfield State University’s English department in the past six years, you know that Dr. Brewster is his own type of superhero.

Brewster not only chaired the department for six years, a position recently taken over by Professor Emily Todd, but he is also an advisor for the literary journal, Persona, and for the English honors society, Sigma Tau Delta. Over the years, he has been involved in dozens of departmental committees. And Brewster is now the assistant coordinator of the WSU Honors Program. In addition to his campus activities, Brewster is active in Sigma Tau Delta at the national level. He chairs STD’s Print/Electronic Communications Committee and was recently elected Eastern Regent.

On top of all this, Brewster balances the demands of his hectic professional life with a busy life at home with his wife, Kristina, and energetic 8-year-old son, Will. Brewster jokes that his strategy for handling his hectic schedule as chair was to “drink a lot of coffee and cut down on sleep.” Then he explained on a more serious note that he has never participated in leisurely activities, such as golf. Further, Brewster says he truly enjoys everything he does, which makes it easy to manage; however, the problem as chair was getting to everywhere he needed to be.

Brewster should have more “free” time since he has handed over his title as chair. However, he has managed to fill this time with plenty of other activities. He’s teaching more classes, including Honors Composition and British Literature, which he last taught in 2005. He has started several projects, including a piece on the Gothic novel that he is preparing for publication. Although Brewster has quickly filled his “free” time with new projects that he is passionate about, he also stated that there were parts of being chair that he does miss.

He says one of the main aspects he misses is being in the center of everything. He loved being a part of all the interesting and exciting things that were happening in the English department and university. He said that his relationship with students and faculty was a lot more direct as chair, and he enjoyed seeing just about everyone involved with the English department every week. Brewster has always had an open door policy. And even though he may not see each and every English major attending Westfield State as

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New Chair Welcomes New Challenges and Responsibilities

BY ALLISON BENNETT, ’12

On any given day, if you peek through the perpetually open door of Bates 128, you’ll be greeted with the sight of high shelves filled to the brim with books, a long wooden desk cluttered with papers, photos, and assorted brick-a-brack, and Professor Emily Todd. She’ll be correcting papers or talking on the phone, her square glasses resting casually on her nose. You will then promptly be shoved aside by a swarm of students and faculty members, all of them talking at once, needing her help with this or that. She smiles calmly, a spot of tranquility in the chaotic tempest of responsibility. For the new chair of the English department, this is all in a day’s work.

Todd became the chair of the English department at the beginning of the fall semester, taking over after Professor Glen Brewster concluded his sixth year as chair. Each term as chair lasts three years, and a new chair is elected at the end of each term. When it came time to pick a new chair, Todd was nominated quickly and voted in unanimously. As chair, Todd is responsible for building the English course schedule, running department meetings, observing classes, overseeing the department budget, and serving on the curriculum committee. “From my vantage point I look at the whole of the department,” she says. In addition to her duties as chair, Todd teaches one course per semester and advises English majors.

Once she became chair, Todd got a new office, a new schedule, and a new view on her life. “My time is defined by the job. I’m not as in control of my time as when I was a teacher. I need to keep my time available for others,” she said. On some days she gets to campus as early as 7:30 a.m. so she can get a jump on her mountains of paperwork while the office is quiet. And there is certainly plenty of commotion. At any time, students might pop in for help figuring out things like their class schedules or progress toward their degrees. Or a faculty member will stop by with problems or questions about a course or department activity. Students have even been known to stop in to borrow a stapler or get help with the copy machine.

Despite the demanding responsibilities, Todd loves her new position. She said she loves how varied it is, working closely with faculty and students and solving problems. As for dislikes, she said, “there’s a lot of paperwork. I don’t dislike it, but it’s the most challenging part of the job for me.”

According to Brewster, Todd is an ideal fit for the position. “It’s important to have patience, knowledge of the way an administration works, and an even personality. You have to enjoy working with people,” he said. Caitlin Farmer, a work-study student in the English office and vice president of Sigma Tau Delta, agrees. She said Todd is “well organized, hardworking, and cares about all the students. Not just the students in her class, but all English students, including the ones that are taking English classes but aren’t English majors.”

Graduating from Amherst College with a BA in American studies, Todd immediately went on to get a Master’s degree in Scottish literature from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and her PhD in literature from the University of Minnesota. She’s also written several articles and has co-edited the book Transatlantic Stowe: Harriet Beecher Stowe and European Culture.

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Department Welcomes New Coordinator of English Education

BY CHALET SEIDEL, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Professors can never anticipate the impact their lessons will have on students. For those who teach future teachers, that impact promises to spread way beyond the confines of a single classroom. New WSU faculty member Sophia Sariganides says that she hopes her teaching will have an immediate impact on students. But she also hopes that years from now, when students are experienced classroom teachers themselves, some of the lessons that didn’t seem as immediately practical when they were in college will come back to “poke at” them.

Sariganides joined the faculty in the fall semester taking over as coordinator of English Education, a position formerly occupied by Delia Fisher, who retired at the end of last year. As coordinator, she oversees the teacher preparation program for English teachers. She also teaches a variety of courses in the program, including her favorite, Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom.

Sariganides received her PhD in English Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, where she taught graduate courses in English Education, supervised student teachers, and co-taught interdisciplinary courses focusing on art at the center of curriculum at the Museum of Modern Art and The Whitney Museum. She also holds an MA from the University of California, Irvine, and a BA in English from UCLA. In California, Sariganides taught literature, writing, and SAT prep courses, as well as seventh- and eighth-grade English.

Like many, she is concerned about limits placed on teachers by the test-driven push toward standardization of curriculum. In her classes, she hopes to inspire future teachers to think about “bigger questions about what curriculum can be,” even if they don’t begin thinking about those things until years after they’ve left her class.

Having Time: Thoughts on Retirement

Editor’s Note: Fisher joined the WSU Faculty in 2001. She writes from Eugene, Oregon, where she is enjoying gardening and spending time with her grandchildren.

Most retirees would take issue with the term itself: retirement sounds a lot like napping, a “drawing back,” as its etymology suggests. A 1600’s definition sums up the discomfort: “to leave company and go to bed.” Since I’m writing this from a desk, not a bed, I’ll try to reframe this concept, or life-change, or... I guess the old word sticks because it’s so difficult to find a better one.

Life does change when the workweek changes. The peace of mornings with coffee and bird watching, of choices about how to do that day’s works, is blissfully
More than 85 students, faculty, staff, and community members crowded into Scanlon Living Room on October 12, 2010, to hear a panel of Native American poets read and discuss their work. The panel included Susan Deer Cloud, Lance David Henson, Ron Welburn, and Stephanie Elliott.

Award-winning poet Susan Deer Cloud is a Catskill native of Mohawk, Seneca, and Blackfoot lineage whose most recent books of poetry are *The Last Ceremony* and *Car Stealer*. Deer Cloud recently edited the poetry anthology *I Was Indian (before being Indian was cool)*, a collection to which all four panelists contributed and that students in my Native American Literature class read.

Lance David Henson is Cheyenne, Oglala Sioux, and French and is currently living in Italy. A Vietnam War veteran, member of the Cheyenne Dog Soldier Society, the Native American Church, and the American Indian Movement, he has published 28 books of poetry.

Ron Welburn is an Assateauge/Gingaskin, Cherokee, and African American author and professor of English at UMass Amherst. He has published several books of poetry, and his poem “Yellow Wolf Spirit,” was selected by Adrienne Rich to be included in *The Best American Poetry 1996*.
Spoken-Word Poetry Performance by Staceyann Chin

By Vanessa Holford Diana, Associate Professor

On March 2, spoken-word poet, performing artist, and LGBT rights political activist Staceyann Chin performed in Scanlon Banquet Hall. A New Yorker and Jamaican national who also has Chinese ancestry, Staceyann Chin has been an “out poet and political activist” since 1998. Chin has performed in the Nuyorican Poets’ Café, one-woman shows off-Broadway, Julie Taymor’s Across the Universe, stage and film versions of Howard Zinn’s Voices of a People’s History of the United States, Tony-nominated Russell Simmons Def Poetry Jam on Broadway, and 60 Minutes. Students in my Black American Literature class read Chin’s candid memoir, The Other Side of Paradise, which was available for a book signing following her performance. Event sponsors included the Guest Lecture Series, the Office of the President, Ely Campus Center Student Programming, and the Department of Ethnic and Gender Studies.

Mi’kMaq filmmaker Jeff Barnaby screens films

By Vanessa Holford Diana, Associate Professor

Just in time for Halloween, Mi’kMaq filmmaker Jeff Barnaby of Montreal visited WSU to screen and discuss two of his short films: File Under Miscellaneous (2010) and The Colony (2007), winner of Best Short Film at the ImagineNative Film Festival and the Winnipeg Aboriginal Film Fest. Both are psychological thrillers exploring the trauma faced by contemporary First Nations people living in urban environments.

File Under Miscellaneous is set in a dystopic metropolitan hellscape, where a spiritually exhausted and destitute Mi’kMaq man has resolved to assimilate into the ruling culture. He visits a surgical clinic—the display window littered with skin and limb samples—and undergoes a gruesome procedure to rid him of his red skin. Inspired by
the poem “Walking Around” by Pablo Neruda, *File Under Miscellaneous* is horror poetry. In *The Colony*, graphic imagery pushes boundaries to capture the descent into madness of a Native man displaced from the reserve and living in the city.

Painting a stark and scathing portrait of post-colonial aboriginal life and culture, Barnaby measures the success of his work by the discussion it generates among audiences. The night Barnaby spoke at Westfield, a crowd of 100 students, faculty, staff, and community members packed Scanlon Banquet Hall and peppered Barnaby with questions about his provocative work for more than an hour. The event was sponsored by the Guest Lecture Series, the Department of Communications, and Ely Campus Center Student Programming.

**Calendar of Events**

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| March 1  | *Persona* submissions deadline  
All submissions should be turned in to the English Office, Bates 103, by 5 pm                                                                  |
| March 2  | An Evening of Poetry with Staceyann Chin. 7 p.m., Scanlon Banquet Hall                                                                            |
| March 3  | Susan Holford Artist’s Reception, 5:30-8 p.m., Arno Maris Gallery, Ely Campus Center, 2nd Floor                                                  |
| March 9  | *Persona* Flash Fiction Contest, 6 p.m., Bates 03                                                                                               |
| March 23-26 | Sigma Tau Delta Conference, Pittsburgh                                                            |
| March 28 | WSU Poetry Slam, 7 p.m., Scanlon Living Room                                                     |
| March 29 | Westfield Women Write, an event in honor of A Month Celebrating Women. 5-7 p.m., Scanlon Living Room                                          |
| April 13 | The Spring New Works Reading, an evening of original work by WSU students, staff, and faculty, 6-8 p.m., in the Scanlon Living Room         |
| April 15 | Haiti Symposium, 6 p.m., Scanlon Banquet Hall                                                   |
| April 15-16 | *Sweeney Todd*, 7:30 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday                                |
| April 27 | Department of English Spring Gathering                                                         |
| April 27-30 | Theatre Arts Program production, *The Oresteia*, 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, 2:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday |

**Continued from Page 3, “New Chair Welcomes New Challenges and Responsibilities”**

Outside of work, Todd enjoys spending time with her husband, Liam Harte, a WSU philosophy professor, and their sons, Tommy (8) and Jamie (5). “I spend my time with them, playing board games and volunteering in their classes during break.” She also enjoys going for long walks, and this winter she began introducing Tommy to cross-country skiing.

Regina Smialek, the department’s administrative assistant, works closely with Todd. She thinks that Todd has been handling the new responsibilities very well. “It didn’t change her. She’s the same person she was before, just busier,” said Smialek.
A letter from alumnus Emma Mackie

I can say with absolute certainty that my time at Westfield State College (as we used to call it) prepared me for what I have encountered in graduate school at Clark University. The Westfield English faculty fostered really open and supportive relationships with their students, and I am happy to say that Clark is a similar environment, especially for graduate students.

Having the opportunity to work with students in the Academic Achievement Center at Westfield really prepared me for the work that I am doing this year as a teaching assistant (TA). Even though I am required to teach a few class sessions each semester, most of my responsibilities involve meeting with undergraduates one-on-one and providing feedback on their papers. My first semester as a TA, I taught a session on Paradise Lost, which I worked with extensively in Professor Neikirk’s British Literature class. I am grateful for this experience because, as a TA, I do not choose the genres and periods that I work with. This semester I am working as a TA in The Short Story, which is a really interesting class. I am also taking Sci-Fi and the Mind of the Other, a literature and philosophy collaboration, and Advanced Shakespeare, two very different, but equally fascinating, classes.

The format of my first class at Clark, Intro to Graduate Studies, focused on the pragmatic aspects of graduate school: abstracts, conferences, grants, etc. In this respect, I felt ahead of the game, as my participation in Sigma Tau Delta (STD) not only introduced me to conference practices, but also familiarized me with presenting. In fact, as required by the intro class, I submitted my seminar paper from my Latino/a Literature class to the Northeast Modern Language Association conference in New Jersey this April and was accepted. It Westfield had not provided me with the opportunity to travel and present at the STD conferences, this acceptance would have been more anxiety provoking than exciting.

More than anything else, working on the Senior Honors Project acquainted me with graduate level research and writing. Almost every graduate class requires a long paper at the end of the semester, which forces you to create your own deadlines. Westfield’s Honors Project prepared me for this, but I also think that working with Professor Diana on such an extensive research project exposed me to the format and process of a Master’s thesis, which I will complete next year.

I am not sure if I would like to continue on to the next step of education and apply for a PhD, or if I would like to try my hand at teaching high school. However, I do know that wherever I end up, I will be able to thank Westfield for the preparation and skills I received during my four years there.

Emma Mackie (’10), Worcester, MA, February 2011

A letter from alumnus Andrew Martin

It’s hard to imagine that a year ago I was still at Westfield State College finishing up my senior year. It’s even harder to believe that my life plan has been playing out as I had hoped.

The first year out of college has been busy. I teach freshman and sophomore English at Oxford High School in Oxford, MA. Oxford is a small town south of Worcester, located in central Massachusetts. The school has fewer than 500 students. Even for its small size, there is an eclectic mix
of students. I am also an assistant football coach for Oxford, which had its first winning season in more than ten years this past season.

Being a first-year teacher, I don’t have much time to sit and reflect, but when I do, I often look back to my experiences at Westfield State. Westfield helped to mold me into the adult that stands in front of 85 ninth and tenth graders a day. Working as a student teacher under another Westfield State alumnus contributed greatly to the teacher I currently am. The college has been able to run deep throughout Massachusetts and provide learning opportunities outside of the walls of 577 Western Avenue.

I often find myself thinking back to the classes I took with the English Department and how they developed my literary criticism skills. I try to incorporate some of the same teaching techniques into my own classes, such as student-led discussion and close reading, so that my students can think critically about literature. Professor Fisher’s Literature and the Adolescent class provided me with experience developing lessons for the works in my curriculum such as Lord of the Flies, Romeo and Juliet, and To Kill a Mockingbird.

One of the most important things I learned from the faculty is how to be passionate about your work. Throughout my time at Westfield, I witnessed a group of people who love what they do, and it became contagious. Through the opportunities that Westfield presented, I was able to build on this new passion: I attended conferences and conventions, wrote for the newspaper, and competed in poetry slams, among many other activities. These experiences happened because of the faculty’s dedication to the student body and their dedication to their fields. Their passion influenced me to start the Film Club at Oxford High School to provide extra learning opportunities for the students beyond classroom hours.

I can honestly say that I am the devoted teacher and coach that I already feel I am because of what I learned at Westfield State.

Andrew Martin (’10), Oxford, MA, February 2011

Alumni News


Zach Bartlett (2008) was admitted into the MFA program at The College of Saint Rose, but opted not to attend. He’s off to New Orleans to have great adventures.

Paige Cerulli (2010) is a veterinary technician in Southwick, MA.

Michelle Do Vale (2009) is teaching at Glenhaven Academy in Marlborough, MA, a private residential school for students with behavior and emotional disorders. As the only English teacher in a staff of five teachers, she says that every day is an adventure.

John Fletcher (2007) is completing his joint MA/MFA program at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. He’s been accepted into the PhD program in Literature at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, which has the oldest program of study of literature in the world. John is also considering schools in the US and is excited that he will have the chance to study for his PhD later this year.

Liz Henderson (2010) is teaching at King Philip Regional High School in Wrentham, MA.

Amanda King (2010) is pursuing an MA in Public Administration at Westfield State University.

Keith Leonard (2008) is an MFA candidate at Indiana University Bloomington, where he serves as Poetry Editor of the Indiana Review and teaches composition and creative writing. A recipient of an Academy of American Poets award and an Association of Writers and Writing Programs Intro Journals Project nomination, Leonard has written poems that appear or are forthcoming in Best New Poets 2009, DIAGRAM, Hayden’s Ferry, Laurel Review, Quarterly West, and Sentence.

Emma Mackie (2010) is attending Clark University with a full scholarship and paid position as a teaching assistant. She will complete her MA in 2012.

Andrew Martin (2010) is teaching English at Oxford High School in Oxford, MA. He has joined the teacher’s baking club and is an assistant football coach for the Oxford Pirates.

Lauren Mattos (2010) is an assistant acquisitions editor for Focal Press.

Kristin Palpini (2003) was promoted in August to the position of Editor of
Ania Saj (2008, MA 2010) teaches eighth grade English language arts at Powder Mill Middle School in Southwick. Saj says her experiences as a substitute teacher in both Ludlow and Westfield prepared her more than she could have predicted and it’s been an extremely rewarding experience so far.

Jennifer Thorton Springer (1994), an Associate Professor of English at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, received the university’s 2011 Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Multicultural Teaching. This prestigious award “acknowledges faculty who integrate culturally relevant content into their curriculum, who employ an inclusive, student-centered pedagogy, and who champion diversity as a value that ensures the academic success of all students.”

Shane Stande (2010) teaches seventh grade at Plymouth Community Intermediate School in Plymouth, MA.


Jessica Torone (2008) teaches eighth grade English language arts at Powder Mill Middle School in Southwick.

composition, as well as speech. Many other faculty who have been here over the past years also continue to hold these temporary full-time positions and to contribute enormously to the department. The department has also added many new writing courses, including a new course called “Career Preparatory Workshop,” taught by Leah Nielsen, which helps students to put together portfolios for graduate school and prepare to submit their writing for publication. Vanessa Holford Diana has introduced new courses on Native American literature to the curriculum, Chalet Seidel created an introduction to writing studies course, and a new course by Catherine Savini trains excellent writers to be peer writing tutors. And two of our faculty designed new short term classes abroad: in June 2010, Marilyn Sandidge, along with faculty from philosophy and mathematics, took a group of students to Greece and Turkey, and in January 2011, Catherine Savini accompanied a group of students to Nicaragua (see next page). This newsletter highlights all the activity and change in our department but also celebrates continuity: we are happy to stay in touch with all of our graduates and to be able to publish your news.

We hope you will come back to visit to see for yourselves what has changed and what has stayed the same in our department. Whether you have been away a couple of years or decades, we are eager to hear about what you are doing. We trust that the books you read and the many stories and poems and papers that you wrote now inform how you work, even if in unexpected ways. Please e-mail or visit and let us hear about the life you have created since leaving Bates Hall.

often anymore, he still maintains a strong involvement with different student groups.

At the beginning of our interview, Dr. Brewster described how his son, Will, had created a superhero called Hippo-man who came complete with comic books. When he was asked which superhero he wanted to be, Brewster paused and contemplated thoughtfully. I don’t believe his long hesitation was due to a lack of imagination, but because Dr. Glen Brewster is already a hero. He may not have the ability to shoot webs out of his wrists or cling to walls like a spider, but he is truly a professor who “super” cares about his students, colleagues, and academia. As a student who has worked with him for years, I can honestly state that his powers are limitless, and he has become my hero.
Building for Education Beyond Westfield

BY SAMANTHA MISKIV, ’11

The morning after settling into Granada, Nicaragua, seventeen students and three faculty members began their volunteer experience in the village of San Ignacio. Construction materials were waiting at the site of a future high school, purchased with funds raised by the group prior to departure. Digging in immediately, the group was able (with the help of the skilled locals) to lay the foundation and construct the beginnings of the outer walls in just five days.

San Ignacio’s only school (until the high school is completed) is a primary school. After fifth grade, children with the means to do so must travel outside the village to attend high school. The current rate of secondary school attendance in the village is just 30%, but will hopefully increase when secondary education becomes more accessible.

While in San Ignacio, the volunteers came to know many of the children who attend the primary school and were able to meet the students who would one day fill the high school they began to build together.

The volunteer mission was an integral part of a travel writing course offered during winter term. Led by Catharine Savini, students are using their experiences in Nicaragua to craft travel essays for submission to an essay contest. Aside from the ongoing reflection and writing prompted by the class, many students remain involved in fundraising efforts for the high school and some are planning return visits.

For more information about La Esperanza Granada the host organization, see www.la-esperanza-granada.org

World Literature Course Takes Students to the Ancient World

BY MARILYN SANDIDGE, PROFESSOR

In May 2010, I taught ENGL 221 World Lit 1 J-Term Turkey and Greece with Professors Ted Welsh (Mathematics) and Liam Harte (Philosophy). We spent two weeks in the two countries considered the crossroads of ancient cultures from Africa, Asia, and Europe. Our focus was on reading the literature and philosophy from the perspective of the ancient Greek writers who assimilated and disseminated this material, while also enriching our understanding of the cultural connections. We examined the material culture and the physical artifacts that reflect their views.

At the ancient library in Ephesus, Turkey: (not in order) Alexandra Bukuras, Laura Chiricosta, Breanne Cogan, Lillian Donnelly, Charlene Harnish, Laurie Longtin, Bryan Palmer, Amy Woody, Heather Young
**Faculty News**

**Stephen Adams**, professor, gave some time during his fall sabbatical to his duties as senior contributor to the *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*, the British equivalent of the MLA Bibliography. He will give up this job when the current volume is completed, after 13 years of subject-indexing collections of scholarly essays from all areas of English studies, something he says has saved him from total ignorance of subjects ranging from cognitive linguistics to medieval place names to contemporary narratology. He also used his time away from grading to “fiddle with” a couple of creative non-fiction projects, “what we used to call personal essays,” set in his native region, the Missouri Ozarks, and he enjoyed visiting some old haunts in the fall to refresh his sense of place. It gladdened his heart to find that the Ozarks still has a distinctive culture but now has locally roasted coffee, too. After the relative solitude of the sabbatical, he says he’s happy to be teaching again and rubbing shoulders with his colleagues.

**Glen Brewster**, professor, was elected Eastern Regent at the annual Sigma Tau Delta international convention in St. Louis in March 2010, one of six regional officers who serve on the national Executive Board. In his four-year term he will help to plan conventions and to set policy and will oversee print and electronic publication awards and project grants. He published “‘New Words’ and ‘New Ideas’: Henry Crabb Robinson as Cultural Tourist” in the British journal *Prose Studies* in August 2009, and he was recently named the assistant coordinator of the WSU Honors Program.


**Lori Desrosiers**, visiting lecturer, has a book of poetry titled *The Philosopher’s Daughter* forthcoming in 2012 from Salmon Poetry in Ireland. This is her first full-length poetry publication.

**Michael Filas**, associate professor, read from his creative non-fiction project, “The Lyrica Cantos,” on two different panels at the 2010 conference of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts in Indianapolis, IN. The first panel featured creative writers and artists examining science, and the second focused on flash fiction. “The Lyrica Cantos” is based on Internet content about the subculture surrounding fibromyalgia and related diagnoses and treatments, including television ads for the Pfizer prescription medication Lyrica. Filas also continues to serve as review editor for *The Information Society*, where he has recently published reviews from WSU professor Tom Gardner, librarian Carolyn Schwartz, and alum John Fletcher.

**Joyce Hayden**, visiting assistant professor, had a poem published in November titled “Ways of Seeing” in the collection *In the Spirit of We’Moon: An Anthology of Art and Writing*. Another poem, titled “How to Escape,” is forthcoming in the We’Moon 2012 calendar. She also has an ongoing painting exhibition at the Nuance Gallery in Windsor, VT, that began in September 2010 and goes through spring 2011. It includes new and ongoing work in a mix of oils, watercolors, and animalscapes. Hayden has two upcoming painting exhibitions as well; the first is this spring in Lee, MA at Main Street Books, called “Animalscapes,” a collection of landscapes painted inside animal shapes. She will also be the featured artist this June at Sage Sisters in Columbus, OH. This exhibition includes oils, watercolors, assemblage work, and animalscapes.

**Ann Higgins**, visiting lecturer, will be presenting a paper in May 2011 at the 46th International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, MI. The title of her paper is “From Romance to Saga and Back Again: Norwegian Echoes in the Middle English *Sir Tristrem*,” and she will be presenting it on a panel organized by the Rossell Hope Robbins Library of the University of Rochester.
Krysia Jopek, visiting lecturer, has released a novel this January titled *Maps and Shadows*. The book describes how a family of five is transported from their home in Poland to Siberia and their struggles with post-Siberian rehabilitation, and is based on the actual events that took place in Poland, Russia, and beyond from 1939 to 1955. Fiction and poetry are combined in Jopek’s novel as the character Helcia uses poetry as a means of coping. *Maps and Shadows* has been nominated for several awards for 2010, including the New England PEN award.

Leah Nielsen, assistant professor, has a poem titled “Teaching Slant Rhyme” forthcoming in the June 2011 issue of *Rattle*. She will also be presenting a paper, “Finding Common Ground with No Common Texts: Teaching Sustained Argument and Complexity to the Millennial Generation,” at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association’s national conference in San Antonio, TX.

Beth Ann Rothermel, professor, has recently presented three works, the first at the 2009 International Society for the History of Rhetoric conference, Quebec, Canada, titled “Rhetorical Invention and the Commonplace Books of Late Eighteenth-Century American Quaker Women.” She presented the second at the 2010 National Council of Teachers of English annual conference in Orlando, FL, titled “Understanding the Needs of English Language Learners by Becoming a Second Language Learner.” This paper describes in-depth the work Beth Ann Rothermel, Trudy Knowles (education), and Kathy Itterly (education) did in conjunction with a grant from Brown University intended to help college faculty better prepare teachers across the disciplines to work with English language learners. In May 2010, she also presented a paper called “There Must Be Method in this Madness: Nineteenth-Century Normal Schools, Pestalozzian Theory, and the Visual Rhetoric of Photographers Mary and Frances Allen” at the Rhetoric Society of America conference in Minneapolis, MN.

Marilyn Sandidge, professor, co-edited the book *Friendship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age Explorations of a Fundamental Ethical Discourse* with Albrecht Classen. The book is the latest in the series Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, which Sandidge also edits with Classen. Previous volumes have examined cultural studies of medieval and early modern views on old age, childhood, urban space, laughter, and war and peace. Sandidge also published “Urban Space as Social Consciousness in Isabelle Whitney’s ‘Will and Testament’” in *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age: Historical, Mental, Cultural, and Social-Economic Investigations*. In May 2010, Sandidge presented the paper “What Are We Teaching?” at the 45th International Congress on Medieval Studies conference in Kalamazoo, MI, and will present “From Royal Medieval Hunting Reserves to Early Modern Royal Gardens: Taming Rural Space” this summer at the International Conference on Rural Space in Cambridge, England. In addition to her scholarly activities, Sandidge is the vice president of a new community nonprofit group, Friends of Westfield Dog Bark, formed to design, fund, and run an off-leash dog park in Westfield.

Sophia Sariganides, assistant professor, presented two papers at the 2011 American Educational Research Association conference. Her works are titled “The Research Interview as Form (Over Method)” in the Qualitative Research Special Interest Group, and “Subjectivities at Stake in Professional Development: Teacher and Researcher Performative Repetitions in Interviews” in the Division of Teacher Education.

Catherine Savini, assistant professor, recently published “Looking for Trouble: Developing Complex Problems and Posing Fruitful Questions” in volume two of *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*. In March, she presented at the Northeast Writing Center Association (NEWCA) conference at Southern New Hampshire University with four peer writing tutors from her fall 2010 Tutoring Writing course: Caitlin Power, Kaela Lucarelli, Cameron Rodak, and Karissa St. Pierre. The title of their presentation was “Can Tutor-Training Courses Effectively Nurture Scholars and Produce Tutors?” Savini is a member of the conference’s steering committee and is NEWCA’s Massachusetts state representative. In April Savini presented the paper “Working Backwards from Capstones to Work Together Toward Coherence” at the Conference on College Composition and Communication as part of a panel with Beverly Williams, Chalet Seidel, Beth Ann Rothermel, and Jennifer DiGrazia. She was also the recipient of a WSU Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grant for “Project Connection: Linking First-Year Composition Outcomes to Writing Across Curriculum” with Beverly Army Williams and Chalet Seidel.
Chalet Seidel, assistant professor, moderated and presented at a panel she organized at the 2011 Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) conference titled “Navigating Networks for Program Development at Smaller Colleges and Universities.” Seidel also presented the paper “Capitalizing on Conflict to Build Coalition Between Composition and Professional Writing” at the 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication as part of a panel with Catherine Savini, Beverly Williams, Beth Ann Rothermel, and Jennifer DiGrazia. She was also the recipient of a WSU Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grant for “Project Connection: Linking First-Year Composition Outcomes to Writing Across Curriculum” with Catherine Savini and Beverly Army Williams.

Elizabeth Starr, associate professor, taught a graduate course called Aesthetics and Reform in Victorian Literature for summer session II. Fresh from a fall 2010 sabbatical during which she worked on a project exploring the shifting relationship between text and illustration across editions of Charles Kingsley’s *Glaucus; or, The Wonders of the Shore* (1854-73), she enjoyed traveling to the Sigma Tau Delta International Convention in Pittsburgh with English majors this spring.

Emily Todd, professor and department chair, presented a paper titled “Reading British Literature in 1820s Springfield, MA: A Study of the Letters of Amelia Peabody” at the conference Separateness and Kinship: Transatlantic

Exchanges between New England and Britain, 1600-1900, at the University of Plymouth, Plymouth, England, in July 2010. She was also a member of the program committee for The First Annual New England Conference for Student Success: Effective Strategies for Educating the Whole Student at the University of Massachusetts in October 2010. Over the past year, she has also enjoyed leading book discussion groups with elementary school teachers as part of the Center for Teacher Education and Research’s Teaching American History grant.

Beverly Army Williams, visiting lecturer, presented “Family Resemblance: Examining the Relationship between Outcomes and Assignment Design among Tenure-Track and Contingency Faculty” at the 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication in Atlanta, GA, in April. Williams will presented as part of a panel with Catherine Savini, Chalet Seidel, Beth Ann Rothermel, and Jennifer DiGrazia titled “Creating a Functional Family: Building Relationships within First-Year Composition and Its Siblings, WAC and Professional Writing.” She was also the recipient of a WSU Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grant for “Project Connection: Linking First-Year Composition Outcomes to Writing Across Curriculum” with Catherine Savini and Chalet Seidel. Williams’ article on hairpin lace knitting is scheduled to appear in the next issue of *CraftSanity* magazine.

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EMAIL: cseidel@wsc.ma.edu

MAIL TO:
English Department
Attn: Newsletter
Westfield State College
Westfield, MA 01086
The National Day on Writing Comes to Westfield

BY CATHERINE SAVINI, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

For the second year in a row, WSU participated in the National Day on Writing (NDoW) with a number of events across campus. NDoW is a national effort to draw attention not only to the significance of writing in our daily lives, but also to the variety of writing activities writers from all walks of life engage in. Westfield State’s Reading and Writing Center (RWC) sponsored six-word memoir booths in Wilson Hall, the Dining Commons, and Bates Hall. Staff of Persona, the English department’s literary journal, selected and published the best six-word memoirs. The English department ran a two-hour Write-In led by Professor Leah Nielsen. Students in the communication department also got involved; they documented the event for their Video Field Production class. And, in an effort to reach beyond the borders of our campus, Westfield’s peer tutors-in-training devoted their afternoon to writing six-word memoirs with local citizens in the Westfield Athenaeum’s Boys and Girls Library. Over 300 students and Westfield residents participated in NDoW.
Anterooms usually are small, and so it’s not too surprising that many of the poems in Richard Wilbur’s latest collection of the same name are small: narrow stanzas of 3 or 4 lines and poems that reach only halfway or so down the page. There is much white space elsewhere, too: nearly 20 out of the 63 pages are blank.

Were this a poet just starting out—and not one who has been publishing what many consider to be the most graceful contemporary American poetry over the last 60 years—you might complain that the poet should not have published until he wrote more poems.

But as Wilbur himself makes clear in many of these wonderful pieces, there isn’t much time left. He turns 90 this year. This collection might be his last book of new poetry published while he is alive. Which is not to say you should read this book out of pity or simply to round out your reading of his oeuvre. *Anterooms* (Houghton Mifflin, 2010) is an accomplished meditation on waiting for death.

The blank pages are what capture the imagination and are used as part of the book’s aesthetic. The poems about nearing death work as anterooms on one side of the page—places to wait before turning to the emptiness, the unknown, on the other side.

Yet there is neither dread nor a gathering of the sentimental to provide comfort. Wilbur’s imagination keeps going, keeps wondering what is beyond, as in the book’s opening poem, “House”; while the deceased woman he mentions was comforted by her dream of a beautiful house, Wilbur will not settle for such heavens: “Is she now there, wherever there may be? / Only a foolish man would hope to find/ That haven fashioned by her dreaming mind./ Night after night, my love, I put to sea.”

Check out the English Department Calendar website for updates and more!

wsc.ma.edu/dept/english/calendar.htm
This spring the Reading and Writing Center launched a peer tutoring program. WSU’s first group of peer writing tutors, Kaela Lucarelli, Caitlin Power, Cameron Rodak, and Karissa St. Pierre, is meeting first-year students where they live by offering one-on-one writing support in Davis and Dickinson halls. Tutors help their peers unpack writing assignments, clarify their ideas, and develop strategies for revision. In order to join the ranks of peer tutors, a student must be recommended by a faculty member, submit a writing sample, and successfully complete a three-credit training course at the 300 level. Tutors continue to attend regular meetings with the director of the Reading and Writing Center for as long as they serve.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the Center’s professional tutors conducted over 1,000 sessions, and the Center is consistently booked at peak times. With the addition of peer tutors, the Center looks forward to assisting all WSU students who aim to improve their writing. To learn more about the Reading and Writing Center, go to this link: www.wsc.ma.edu/reading.

Stephanie Elliott, mainly of Irish and Scottish descent, credits the Mi’kmaq ancestry of her great-grandmother for piquing her interest in Native culture. She organizes Native film and cultural events at Green Street Arts Center in Middletown, CT, and is employed by Wesleyan University Press. Her poetry has been published in The Christian Science Monitor and Yellow Medicine Review.

After each poet read, the panel entertained questions from the audience for an hour-long discussion, followed by book signings. The event was sponsored by the Guest Lecture Series, the Campus Center, the Office of the President, the Department of Ethnic and Gender Studies, and the Department of English.

My house is now ready for visitors, and I genuinely would love to give folks a place to come to explore this very beautiful Northwest. I miss the brilliant New England skies behind glorious autumn maples, but I love the western glory of high mountains, wide river valleys, and green, green landscapes of this Sweet Oregon Home.

To all, I send many hugs and very best wishes. I would love to hear from you. Regina has my e-mail.

Delia
Eugene, OR, February 2011
The House

BY RICHARD WILBUR

Sometimes, on waking, she would close her eyes
For a last look at that white house she knew
In sleep alone, and held no title to,
And had not entered yet, for all her sighs.
What did she tell me of that house of hers?
White gatepost; terrace; fanlight of the door;
A widow’s walk above the bouldered shore;
Salt winds that ruffle the surrounding firs.
Is she now there, wherever there may be?
Only a foolish man would hope to find
That haven fashioned by her dreaming mind.
Night after night, my love, I put to sea.

New Yorker, August 31, 2009