



College of Letters & Science

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Spring 2015

Annotations

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



UW English in the Madison Community and Beyond

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Caroline Levine

Caroline Levine,
Chair, Department of English

Both of my parents were born into poverty in the 1930s. My father, the son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, spent his childhood playing ball on the streets of Brooklyn. My mother, descended from Puritans who had sailed to Massachusetts in 1632, grew up in a household so destitute that she and her little sisters sometimes picked through the neighbors' trash for food. Oatmeal was such a staple of her childhood diet that to this day my mother can't stand the sight of it. What lifted both out of poverty and brought them together was cheap and accessible higher education.

At the time, even the poorest kids who had done well in high school could afford college, and my mother paid her own way through Barnard, studying psychology because it was the only major she could finish entirely in the mornings, leaving her time to get to work in the afternoons and evenings. My father went on a scholarship to Cornell, where he fell in love with classical music, art, and literature, and decided that he wanted to pursue a Ph.D. in European history. Eventually they got married, and my father, who became a history professor, collected so many old books that their weight started to weaken the upper stories of my childhood home.

I have led a lucky and privileged life myself, a life filled with books and ideas, fascinating people and chances to travel around the world. I pinch myself every day: I just can't believe how fortunate I am to have such a meaningful, interesting, satisfying career as chair of one of the world's great English departments, surrounded by poets and scholars, students whose eyes are just being opened to new cultural riches, and a library so vast that I could lose myself in it over and over.

Although there is no question that I am a very lucky person indeed, it isn't just luck that got me here. It is a society that once invested a great deal in education—that opened up pathways for poor people not just to climb up the social ladder but to discover aspects of themselves and the world that would otherwise have been accessible only to the elite. I owe a deep debt to a society that bothered to invest in the promise of a couple of poverty-stricken kids, in their talent and their curiosity.

I know that lots of you have similar tales to tell. The University of Wisconsin has long been one of the most successful institutions in the world for offering top-quality affordable higher education to kids from all backgrounds. I join with many of you in wanting—intensely—to keep it that way. Did the UW change your life? Do your families still feel its effects? I am eager to hear your stories. Please send them to me!

Caroline Levine
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CHARTING A PATH

Students in UW–Madison’s College of Letters & Science are bright, creative and hard-working. Each fall, they bring fresh perspectives and inquisitive minds to campus. But they face challenges as they prepare for life after graduation—whether it is four months or four years away. Competition for jobs is fierce and young Badgers need to articulate what they have learned, in and out of the classroom.

To help them learn how, Dean John Karl Scholz launched the Letters & Science Career Initiative (LSCI), which will engage students in personal and career development from the time they step on campus to graduation.

The LSCI is a new, coordinated approach to serving students across L&S departments and programs. The initiative aims to spark students’ imaginations about career possibilities, help them find majors that align with their passions, connect them with strong alumni networks, and coach them to talk about the lessons and skills they learned at UW–Madison.

Already underway:

- Recruitment and hiring of more academic and career advisors
- A new sophomore-year academic- and career-planning course
- Analysis of alumni data, gleaned from a massive survey, to help students plan their own career trajectories



John Karl Scholz, Dean, College of Letters & Science

- Alumni mentors tapped to share tips, strategies, and opportunities

You can help. Dean Scholz is looking for alumni, friends and parents who can share valuable insights about the job market, internships, career development and more. To get involved, visit go.wisc.edu/lsci or email the LSCI team at careerinitiative@ls.wisc.edu. You can also read more about the LSCI in this year’s L&S Annual Report at go.wisc.edu/annualreport.



N.C. Poet Laureate Honored as Distinguished Alumnus

The English Department’s Board of Visitors honored Shelby Stephenson (’74), Poet Laureate of North Carolina, as the recipient of its 2015 Distinguished Alumni Award at the annual ceremony held May 9.

Shelby Stephenson grew up on a small farm near Benson, in the Coastal Plain of North Carolina. “Most of my poems come out of that background,” he says, “where memory and imagination play on one another. I have written many poems about the mules we worked until I was in the seventh grade and, after that—the tractor. My early teachers were the thirty-five foxhounds my father hunted. The trees and streams, fields, the world of my childhood—all that folklore—those are my subjects.”

After leaving the farm for college, he graduated from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (B.A. 1960) where he also studied law, University of Pittsburgh (M.A. 1967), University of Wisconsin–Madison (Ph.D. 1974), and worked as a radio and television announcer, salesman, right-of-way agent, and farmer. He was professor of English and editor of *Pembroke Magazine* until his retirement in 2010. The state of North Carolina presented him with the 2001 North Carolina Award in Literature. And he has

received the Bellday Poetry Prize, the Oscar Arnold Young Award, the Zoe Kincaid-Brockman Award, the Brockman-Campbell Award, the Bright Hill Press Chapbook Prize, and the Playwright’s Fund of North Carolina Chapbook Prize.

UNDER · BUTCHER · GROUND



STARTING AN UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT

Jonny Hunter got his start underground. In 2002, while studying English at UW–Madison, Hunter began cooking in the Catacombs, a space beneath Pres House on Library Mall. There, with a group of fellow students, Hunter prepared hearty vegetarian meals—braised greens and tomato polenta, or quiche specials on Fridays—that were both delicious and affordable. Employing creativity and efficiency, Hunter kept prices at under \$2.50 a plate, quickly generating a dedicated following. His core group of six volunteers eventually grew to over 60, serving up to 125 lunches per day.

Raised in an isolated religious community in east Texas, Hunter came to Madison in order to escape into a sea of students and to expose himself to outside perspectives. His immersion in literary texts, particularly the post-modernists, both informed his desire

to make social change and enabled a vision of what collective action might look like. Hunter refers to his time in the Catacombs kitchen as an “anarchist cooking project,” where the people involved worked toward the common goal of building a community. In modeling their business, they wanted to get rid of hierarchies and create a space on campus that they could call home. They found it in their underground kitchen, but it was English that helped lay the groundwork for Hunter: “The ideas and skills I learned as an English major—creative writing, interpreting texts—are fundamental to how I think.”

After graduating in 2005, Hunter sought ways to integrate his love of food with his inclination toward advocacy. With a core group of friends, including some he made at the Catacombs, he decided to put down roots in Madison, officially forming Underground Food Collective in 2007. He sees this career decision as being fundamentally connected to a broader mission: “With a business, you can make a social change. I want to treat my employees and my ingredients with respect. To learn about farmers and the people who are selling to us, to develop a community around food.”

Even as he works to shape the city of Madison, Hunter still finds time to share his appreciation for the culture of food with students at UW–Madison, helping to facilitate events for the Wisconsin Union Distinguished Lecture Series, cooking with UW Slow Food, and participating in gatherings of the F.H. King Students for Sustainable Agriculture.

Meanwhile, Underground Collective is at the heart of Madison’s food movement, with a catering service, a butcher service, a Willy Street storefront, a Johnson Street restaurant (Forequarter), and another restaurant in development. Bringing to bear the creativity that made the Catacombs so successful, Hunter and his partners strive to be at the forefront of what’s interesting in food and to share a vision that encompasses care for the lives of those they serve and the environment of which they are a part.



DESIGNING WISCONSIN

Phil Levy graduated from UW–Madison with an English degree in 1964. Over the course of his career, however, his love of literature has been transformed into a broader dedication to the aesthetics of where people live and the importance of art in the local community.

While a student at UW, Levy supplemented his literary education with a variety of applied art classes and design electives. After graduating, he moved west to pursue further education, first at UCLA in Industrial Design, and then at the Arts Center in downtown Los Angeles. There, he developed the professional relationships that shaped his understanding of the design field and that led him to join the International Interior Design Association (IIDA).

Though inspired by the aesthetics of the West Coast, Levy made his way back to Madison in the late 80s, starting Phillip Levy Fine Furniture & Interior Design from the basement of his home.

Rooted in his love of architecture, Levy's aesthetic vision shows an aptitude and finesse for diverse styles. But he tunes

his designs to the community of his clients, drawing on his history with Wisconsin to cater to the specific needs of Madison: "I work to find the pulse of a community and adapt." Meanwhile, he maintains a strong engagement with the local arts, serving as the director on many arts boards, including the Madison Art Center, Madison Opera, Madison Symphony Orchestra, and Madison Chamber Orchestra. He has also served as the President of the state chapter of IIDA for three years.

Levy's history in Madison and special sensitivity to place also extends to the UW campus, both through his ongoing engagement with the English Department and the School of Human Ecology, and also thanks to his role as interior designer for the Chancellor's home, Olin House, which was completed in 2009.

Olin House, built by a law professor in 1915, is a mix of colonial revival and Arts and Crafts styles, with beautiful quarter-sawn oak flooring and expansive common rooms. It is now used for hosting university functions. Levy incorporated art from former UW students into a sophisticated design that complements the historic home's past and will last far into the future.



Phil Levy ('64, center) at his design showroom, Phil Levy Fine Furniture and Interior Design



Olin House

A PLACE OF OUR OWN

Building the English Department's lakeside home

Courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives (ID S03058)



Demolitions on the site of Helen C. White in 1965

Forty-five years ago, the building that now sits at the corner of North Park Street and Observatory Drive was still in progress, with dump trucks in its courtyard and scaffolding along its ramparts. But even before construction was completed, in June 1970, the Board of Regents of

UW-Madison decided to name the building after Helen Constance White, one of the English Department's most renowned, honored, and beloved faculty members, who had died in 1967.

The following year, the English Department took up residency in the

Courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives (ID S03054)



Helen C. White under construction, circa 1970



halls of Helen C. and has called it home ever since.

Today, the architecture of Helen C. White Hall mainly elicits comments about its Brutalist, concrete exterior, but the building was the center of much debate throughout the 1960s. Initial plans called for a ten-story tower, large plazas on two sides, a network of pedestrian overpasses from Bascom Hill and Park Street, and a tunnel connecting the building to the Union. It would house an undergraduate library, the library science department, and parking facilities as well as extensive offices. The top two floors would be a faculty club, replacing the University Club.

High-rise dreams extended beyond the allotted budget, however, and only some of these plans came to fruition. Though the initial building committee met in November of 1965, it was June of 1968 before the final design was approved and Orville E. Madsen and Sons of Minneapolis, MN, was awarded the \$4.1 million contract.

People like to joke that there are two seasons in Madison: winter and construction. Daily, students and pedestrians skirt heavy machinery and chain link fences as the buildings that define their educational and social experiences are reimagined, updated, and transformed. In this light, Helen C. White Hall is now a venerable presence on campus.

What do you remember about the buildings that defined your experience in the English Department?

WISCONSIN'S PROLIFIC POETRY AND PROSE

As students, fellows, professors, and graduates of the #3 creative writing MFA program in the country (*Poets & Writers*, 2012), UW authors have published an array of acclaimed works during the past year.

Quan Barry

UW Creative Writing Professor, *She Weeps Each Time You're Born*: a "beautiful, transporting novel" (Kirkus Reviews)

Oliver Bendorf

UW Poetry MFA (2013), *The Spectral Wilderness*: "Stunningly lyrical and beautifully theoretical" (Stacey Waite)

Chloe Benjamin

UW Fiction MFA (2012), *The Anatomy of Dreams*: "A debut novel of subtlety, depth, intrigue and tenderness" (Lorrie Moore)

Brittany Cavallaro & Rebecca Hazelton

UW Poetry MFA (2011) and Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing Fellow (2011), respectively. *No Girls No Telephones*: "The poems stay with me, ringing in my ears, burrowing into my head" (Jay Parini)

Anthony Doerr

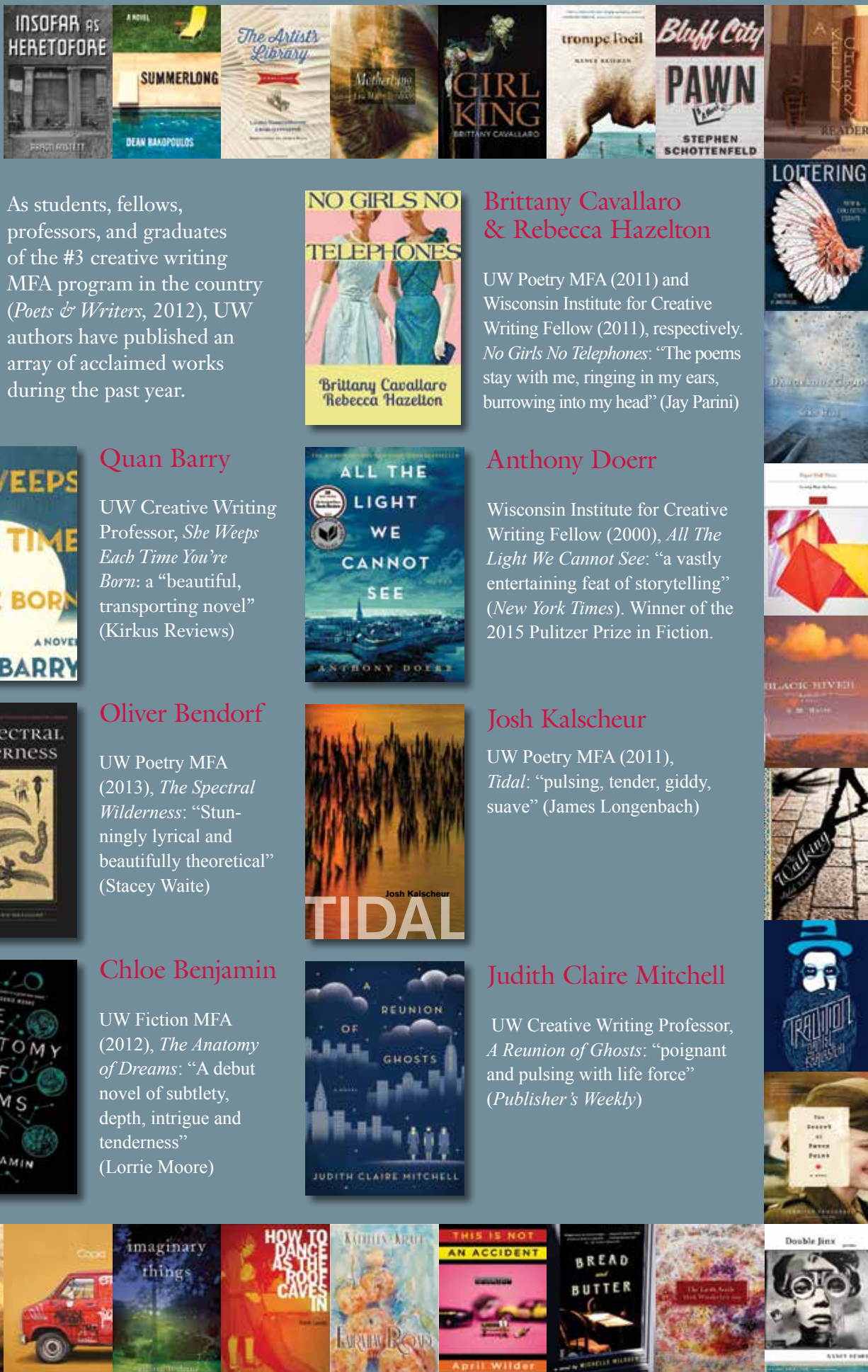
Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing Fellow (2000), *All The Light We Cannot See*: "a vastly entertaining feat of storytelling" (*New York Times*). Winner of the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction.

Josh Kalscheur

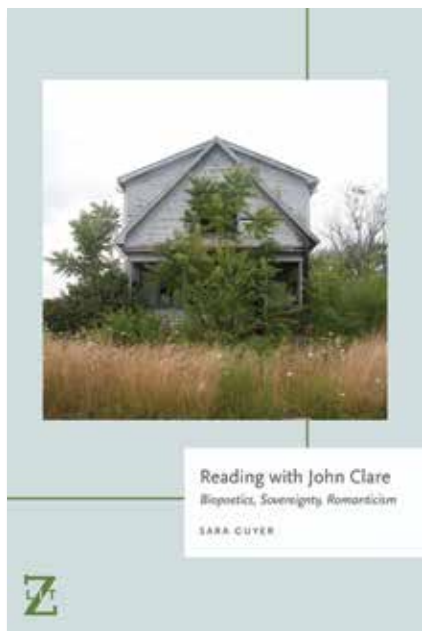
UW Poetry MFA (2011), *Tidal*: "pulsing, tender, giddy, suave" (James Longenbach)

Judith Claire Mitchell

UW Creative Writing Professor, *A Reunion of Ghosts*: "poignant and pulsing with life force" (*Publisher's Weekly*)

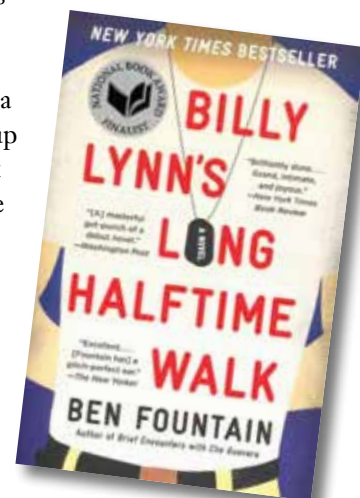


Innovative New Books from Literary Studies Professors Sara Guyer and Caroline Levine



Professor Tom Schaub's Spring Reading Pick

"I'm still hot for Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Half-Time Walk*. It's a terrific Afghanistan novel, though set in USA, in the Dallas Cowboys' football stadium. As a comic sendup of USA faux hero-culture and the alienation of soldiers, it makes a poignant satire."



Your life, your plan.

You've made choices and you've reaped the rewards.

Being in charge of your own legacy is part of who you are. If there's a plan, you're going to be the one to make it.

To discuss your goals and ways to give back to the UW, contact the Office of Gift Planning at the University of Wisconsin Foundation.

Scott McKinney at 608-262-6241
scott.mckinney@supportuw.org

supportuw.org/gift-planning



ALUMNI GIFT NOOK

Your gifts, large and small, are crucial to maintaining our reputation as a leading national humanities department. We are so thankful for the many alumni gifts that, among other things, assist undergraduates, support top faculty and graduate students, and fund visiting speakers and events. Contribute online with our automated form through the University Foundation at www.supportuw.org/giving?seq=2597

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for your contribution.*

BADGERS BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES

English undergraduates at work in communities near and far

DESHAWN MCKINNEY ('17), a creative writing student and First Wave and PEOPLE Scholar from Milwaukee, is dedicated to making the UW–Madison campus a more inclusive place.

Motivated by the recent deaths of young black men across the country (including the shooting of 19-year-old Tony Robinson on March 16 in Madison), and drawing on his own experience of alienation at UW, McKinney organized a



Vanessa Lauber

successful on-campus demonstration on December 14, 2014. Following a banner that read “Black Lives Matter,” more than 800 students and supporters marched from the top of Bascom Hill,



Photo courtesy of Joseph Marley

Deshawn McKinney organized a campus vigil on December 14, 2014

down Park Street, and back to College Library for a 30-minute die-in, with demonstrators filling all three floors.

McKinney’s involvement in social change also includes membership in the collaborative organization Students for Education and Climate Equality (SECE), the Black Student Union, and Young, Gifted and Black. Each of these UW and Madison-based groups

brings people together around the goal of racial justice. Through advocacy and activism, they seek an improved social and academic environment for people of color, both on campus and in the broader community. “For a lot of people in the coalition that we’re building, this is the first time they’ve been proud to call themselves a Badger,” McKinney said. “Change is possible.”



Vanessa Lauber

Tutoring through The Urban League of Greater Madison–Schools of Hope has been one of the most influential experiences I’ve had during my time at UW. It’s been an honor and a privilege to help students grow academically. As I’ve worked with several students and begun to see the effect that tutoring had on them, I’ve also seen a change in myself. I am now so excited to graduate and to continue working with children or other people in need, and am considering working with the Peace Corps or teaching English abroad. I am so thankful for the opportunity I have had, and continue to have, as a tutor and for the perspective it’s given me on the community beyond the college campus.

Micaela Haggengjos ('16)

JORDAN KAHLE ('16) also sought out the classroom as a place to devote her energy. That classroom just happened to be in northern India. An English major from Middleton, WI,



with interests in South Asian studies, global cultures, and Hindi language studies, Kahle spent the summer of 2014 teaching at the Chokling Tibetan monastery in Bir, Himachal Pradesh, a remote Himalayan village.

After a long and bumpy bus ride from Delhi, Kahle had to face daily challenges as she designed her own curriculum and sought out supplies from the surrounding village. With a classroom full of boys, ranging in age from five to eleven, Kahle also had to adapt her lesson plans.

"I actually ended up teaching the math lesson most days. My co-teacher and I would handwrite individualized worksheets to give to the students, so that everyone could feel like they were working at the right pace." She credits the communication skills and ability to process complex ideas she has gained as an English student with equipping her to face the daily struggle of creating a curriculum and working with such a wide range of students.



Students in Kahle's class huddle over their work



Chokling Tibetan Monastery

All photos on this page courtesy of Jordan Kahle

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AT
UW-MADISON ANNOUNCES

THE THIRD ANNUAL MENDOTA SEMINAR

200 Years of Jane Austen

DISCUSSIONS WITH
UW-ENGLISH FACULTY:

EMILY AUERBACH

SUSAN BERNSTEIN

THERESA KELLEY

CAROLINE LEVINE

JOIN A SESSION FOR HIGH
SCHOOL INSTRUCTORS ON
TEACHING AUSTEN

ATTEND A FILM SCREENING
AND DISCUSSION OF
AUSTEN AND THE MOVIES
(FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23)

Saturday, October 24, 2015
Helen C. White Hall
University of Wisconsin-Madison

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Photo courtesy of University of Wisconsin–Madison Archives (ID S10222)

No Mystery to Royal Color *Cardinal 115/51*

Purple Proves Practical--Helen White

By KEN GERMANSON

"I can't wear black. Dr. White said, 'It makes me look absolutely forlorn. You'd want to take up a collection if you saw me in it.' Brown is too cold for her and blue doesn't have enough color," Dr. White says.

So, purple became her color. She says it is a very versatile color with many interesting shades, which can easily be matched together.

There's fuchsia, violet, and an endless number of ways red and blue can be mixed together.

Yesterday when interviewed, Dr. White, who is a member of the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural organization, was wearing a fuchsia suit with a purple hat. It made a smart looking combination.

Dr. White's passion for purple is a campus tradition, and a pair of her gloves were sold at the Campus Carnival faculty auction last fall.

Dr. White said she had recently purchased a green suit, which went (continued on back page)

It's pure practicality—not a fashion whim or a deep personal mystery—which prompts Dr. Helen C. White, famous English Prof., to wear purple.

In an interview yesterday Prof. White, whose taste for the royal color has long created much speculation, was more than willing to answer questions of why she prefers purple.

She said she started wearing purple for "travel" reasons.

Then she went on to explain that in the early years of the war when she was president of the American Association of University Women, she had to do a lot of traveling. That made it necessary to have wearing apparel that matched easily. Having clothes of one color would do the trick.

But why purple?

That is for purely aesthetic reasons, Dr. White admits. She didn't like cold colors—but preferred dark warm colors.



PROF. WHITE
... a passion for purple

ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS

Do you have a recent work of fiction, non-fiction, or poetry that you would like to share with the English Department community?

Tell us all about it at annotations@english.wisc.edu and we will feature it on our alumni bookshelf.

<http://go.wisc.edu/457x9g>

Professor Helen C. White was interviewed in the *Daily Cardinal* in 1951 about the motivation for her purple wardrobe: "purely aesthetic reasons."