

WINTER 2022

ANNOTATIONS

UW Madison English Department Alumni Newsletter

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Photo courtesy of
UW Division of the Arts

PETER H. CONNOR FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP

Newly established in fall 2021, this scholarship will support English majors with demonstrated financial need. We spoke to Peter Connor about his motivations behind starting the scholarship and more.

What made you decide to establish this scholarship?

Once in a while, the stars align and connect. It started with gratitude for my UW and Madison experience, and the other being the realization that you have the means to affect someone deserving. They are deserving, yet the opportunity is out of reach due to financial restraints. There's injustice, but it's an injustice that can be at least partially put right by a simple gesture. A gesture from the wonderful UW English Department in conjunction with the UW Foundation.

There is so much wonder, beauty, and hard work being done by students at the UW. I came to understand this fully during my time on the Board of Visitors through our interactions with current students. These students are so impressive. But yet there is just one simple ugly burden that can be, to varied degrees, lifted with the helping hand of someone who sees the need and potential.

Why do you think it's important to support the humanities and higher education as a whole?

The humanities is where the heart and head live. It's not new, in fact, it is an age-old quandary, but so much of "success" or "value of education" is judged by "return on investment." This bottom-line attitude drives too many educational and humanity-based decisions in a less humane direction. This is a small-minded, lousy societal thought myth. It cannot support a student who wants to further their education by understanding the human condition empathetically and philosophically. Let's not focus so much on the route from A to B, but let's meander through the trials and tribulations of literature, philosophy, and art for lessons that guide us to see the map of life rather than the simple path ahead.

Peter Connor, UW English alum and donor of the English department's newest scholarship



Can you share some of your favorite memories as an English major at UW? Did you have any favorite courses or professors?

My absolute favorite course: English 511 Recent British and American Literature. It was a night class on Mondays. A classmate (still a good friend and musician some may know) and I would head to a restaurant called the White Horse Tavern. Mondays were key because The White Horse needed to get rid of all their seafood from the weekend before it spoiled. The deal was \$.05 shrimp... stay with me here. We would leave class, dark and often sometimes cold, and stroll from Humanities up State Street and over to the White Horse where we would eat our fill of sketchy seafood, drink beer and sometimes talk about the lecture (sometimes not). I think of those times fondly; holding the memories tight and occasionally getting a bit nauseous.

In addition to this scholarship, you also serve on the English Department Board of Visitors. Why is it important for you, as an alumnus, to stay involved with the UW English Department community?

Time on the Board of Visitors, as short as it's been, has been eye-opening and I've been gobsmacked by the talent, intellect, and ambitions of the students we met. This English Department is incredibly well run. I have been exceedingly impressed with the vision and purpose by which the department is led. The Department is not just relevant contemporarily but, more impressively, the passageway to the future is well lit. My time on the Board will one day end but the Department will go on forever and this is most important.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with our alumni readers about the scholarship or your philanthropic work in general?

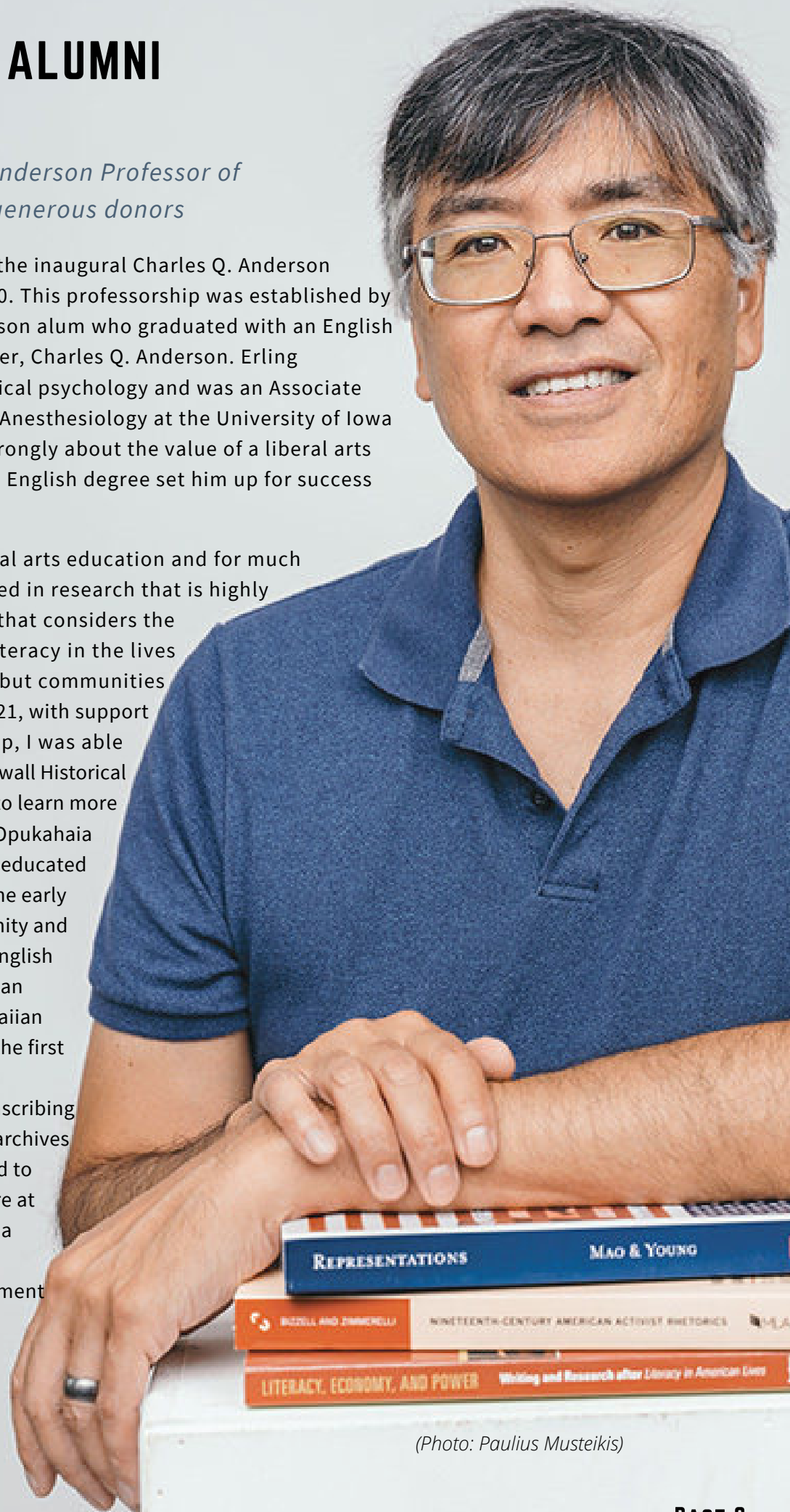
Yes. Get involved. Do it. It's fantastically rewarding to your heart and, most importantly, to the students. Sure, financial support is important and mentorship is invaluable. We all love the UW. Have you ever met one alumnus who doesn't look back at their time at UW with glee, reverence, and content? You would have to be one soulless newt to hope that those following in our footsteps should not share this equally great experience.

THE POWER OF ALUMNI GIVING

Morris Young, Charles Q. Anderson Professor of English, on the impact of generous donors

I was honored to be appointed the inaugural Charles Q. Anderson Professor of English in July 2020. This professorship was established by Dr. Erling Anderson, a UW-Madison alum who graduated with an English major in 1972, to honor his father, Charles Q. Anderson. Erling Anderson earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and was an Associate Professor in the Department of Anesthesiology at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. He felt strongly about the value of a liberal arts education and believed that his English degree set him up for success in the sciences.

I also believe strongly in a liberal arts education and for much of my career I have been engaged in research that is highly interdisciplinary in nature and that considers the uses of writing, rhetoric, and literacy in the lives of Asian Americans specifically but communities of color more broadly. In July 2021, with support from the Anderson professorship, I was able to work in the archives of the Cornwall Historical Society in Cornwall, Connecticut to learn more about Henry Obookiah or Heneri Opukahaia who was a native Hawaiian youth educated at the Foreign Mission School in the early 19th C. His conversion to Christianity and his learning to read and write in English inspired the first sustained Christian missionary settlement in the Hawaiian Islands. He also helped to create the first Hawaiian-English dictionary and orthographic conventions for transcribing Hawaiian language. While in the archives I also came across artifacts related to several Chinese students who were at the school in the 1820s, including a “Chinese Friendship Album” and letters that often served to document one’s acquisition of English and acceptance of Christianity.



(Photo: Paulius Musteikis)

Cont'd on page 4

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

I was heartbroken to read of Professor Henning's passing in the latest Alumni Newsletter. He was my favorite professor as well, and had a profound impact on my life and career.

When I was preparing to graduate with an English undergraduate degree way back in 1996, Prof. Henning, who had become a great mentor to me, took me to lunch to talk about my post-graduate plans. I spoke at length about wanting to be an English professor. He asked me what I loved - and didn't love - about the work, about the kind of lifestyle I wanted to live, about the kind of person I was. I think he saw things in me that I wasn't ready to see or admit yet.

Ultimately, he told me that, unless I couldn't see myself doing anything else, maybe I should think about law school. He was very candid about the realities of tenure-track positions and the pressure to publish. He was also very candid about the economics of academia. He gently suggested that I might be better-suited for a career in law.

Coming from a family of doctors, "lawyer" was a bit of a dirty word. But, I took his advice and took the LSAT. And did really well. I took a few detours, but I ended up returning to Wisconsin for law school and having a great legal career that I've enjoyed enormously. I owe Prof. Henning a huge debt of gratitude for being an objective voice and encouraging me to think critically about my future and what I might find the most challenging and rewarding.

On a personal level, I've never stopped loving literature, especially Shakespeare, which I've passed on to my own children from the time they were young. Professor Henning will always be my favorite professor.

-Monica Marquardt Riederer

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

We love hearing from our alumni readers and appreciate your feedback and input on our newsletter.

Please send any and all responses to webadmin@english.wisc.edu

I was sad to hear of the passing of Howard Weinbrot. His memorable seminar on Pope, Swift, and James Thomson was the first I took as a new graduate student from Britain in 1978. During my stay in Madison, Howard was a kindly informant of all things 18C, and I remember he was aghast when I told him that I had chosen to write on Byron for my dissertation! Together with Merton Sealts, James Nelson, and Robert Baker, HW is often in my memory.

-Michael Sharp

Correction: In last issue's Letter from the Chair and in "Odyssey Project puts Wisconsin Idea into Action" we misstated that the English Department provides financial support for the Odyssey Behind Bars fellowship. The Odyssey Project generously and fully funds the TA position for Odyssey Behind Bars.

THE POWER OF ALUMNI GIVING

Cont'd from page 3

Morris Young, Charles Q. Anderson
Professor of English, on the impact of generous donors

What was emerging was a portrait of an institution where Chinese, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans were brought together and educated, ostensibly in the service to Christianity, but that also presents a complex picture of how writing and literacy were acquired and used by people who were first thought to be beyond education but could then use the tools of reading and writing to fashion their own sense of being and belonging.

This early example of writing by Chinese in America connects to my work in Asian American rhetoric. My goal is to make visible lesser-known work such as the *Appeal of the Chinese Equal Rights League to the People of the United States for Equality of Manhood*, petitions and letters produced by incarcerated Japanese Americans during World War II, and field songs from plantation era Hawai'i, among a range of texts, including speeches, spoken word, visual arts, and other modes of rhetorical activity. The Anderson professorship has allowed me to work in archives as well as to support project assistants to help me identify, collect, and reimagine Asian American rhetorical activity. I have found this work to be even more important in our current times when we have seen a rise in anti-Asian rhetoric and violence. The Anderson professorship has provided the support to research the history of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. and their uses of rhetoric, writing, and literacy to argue for their place in America and respond to social injustice.

**Thank
you!**



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear alumni and friends of the English Department!

It is such a pleasure to work in a department where everybody cares deeply about teaching. In this issue of our newsletter, we are again highlighting some of the exciting projects that show how our instructors empower students to relate their course work to challenges outside of the classroom. We are proud of and energized by our connection with the First Wave program, which draws student-artists with an interest in spoken word poetry to the English major.

No department at UW-Madison is home to more teaching award winners than the Department of English. This year, special congratulations go to our nominees and award winners Professor Joshua Calhoun, winner of a distinguished teaching award for his innovative classes combining Shakespeare studies with hands-on projects in the environmental humanities, to Dr. Heather Swan, whose work in ecopoetry is featured in this newsletter, and to Ph.D. student Elaine Cannell, a recipient of the campus-wide Innovation in Teaching Award for teaching assistants. These nominations not only recognize the excellence of the nominees, they also reflect a culture of mentorship and collegiality.

We are also highlighting the role of alumni in the recognition of excellence. Support from alumni can take many shapes. We are grateful to alumni like Peter Connor, who serves on our Board of Visitors and whose family has generously established a fellowship for English majors. We are grateful to alumni who have participated in career events, who speak publicly about the value of a degree in English, or who have supported us financially. Look out for the next Day of the Badger on April 5/6!

We invite you to follow our stories and accomplishments on social media - flick on the icons below to connect with our various social media accounts!

On Wisconsin!

Anja Wanner

Enid H. Anderson Professor of English and Department Chair



MAKING WAVES

Highlighting First Wave English majors

The First Wave Scholarship Program is truly one of a kind. The hip-hop scholarship provides students with a four-year, full tuition ride to UW-Madison and is the first, and to this day, the only hip-hop and spoken word scholarship program in the country. Housed within UW's Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives (OMAI), the program cultivates a tight-knit sense of community and provides the resources for First Wave scholars to hone their craft.

Each year, the program admits a cohort of about 11-15 students who live together in The Studio, a learning community in a residence hall that is specifically designed to foster creativity and collaboration among artists on campus. The Studio, which is also open to students outside of the First Wave program, hosts programming such as student showcases, dance workshops, and more. The cohort program and support provided by The Studio help First Wave scholars navigate their first year on campus and build connections with the artists in their cohort.

Sarah Abbas, a first-year creative writing major and First Wave Scholar



"Freshman year, we were in a FIG (First Year Interest Group) together, and the second semester we created a show together," explains Ella Deitz, a third-year First Wave scholar majoring in creative writing. "This collaboration early in our college career helped establish trust in each other when it comes to sharing and supporting each other's work."

Helen Lee, associate professor of glassblowing and faculty director of the Studio, witnesses firsthand the seriousness with which First Wave scholars cultivate creative practices that will continue long past graduation.

"What is really interesting about [First Wave] is that these are students who are studying such a wide, vast array of disciplines for their majors and for all of them, having and sustaining a creative practice is important in their lives and is something that will fuel them," Lee said. "Whether that meshes and overlaps directly to what their major is, to have that shared bond and to understand how creative practice is part of one's life and one's outlook on the world is super important."

For Sarah Abbas, a first-year creative writing major, First Wave scholar, and current resident of The Studio, the unique learning and living environment has resulted in serendipitous creative encounters.

“A lot of times collaboration comes up naturally,” Abbas said. We just run into each other and we’re in conversation and start sparking ideas up. We are also in a class that is designed specifically for creating bodies of work in collaboration with each other. That’s a great place to generate ideas, support each other in our creative endeavors.”

First Wave scholars majoring in creative writing also emphasize the important role that English department faculty play in helping them hone their craft and sharpen their writing.

“My favorite course would definitely be English 411 “Traditional Poetic Forms” with Amy Quan Barry, and of course Professor Barry is my favorite,” said Zack Lesmeister, a third-year creative writing major and First Wave Scholar. “She is incredibly insightful and gives amazing feedback.”

Similarly, Deitz notes that one of her favorite classes was a poetry course with Leila Chatti that culminated in the creation of a chapbook. “[Professor Chatti’s] thoughtful feedback and skill in creating a welcoming and productive class really helped me complete a project that I never thought I would write,” said Dietz.



The Studio residents take part in a dance workshop

Photo courtesy of
UW Division of the Arts

“WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER THROUGH LAUGHING, STUDYING, AND TRAVERSING THIS PWI TOGETHER.”

And although Abbas has only completed one full semester at UW, Professor Tim Yu’s Introduction to Asian American Literature course has already deeply impacted her and the way she approaches her own writing.

“That was the first class where I’ve ever read literature that was in relation to my own history and where we read stories that were about immigration and cross continental upbringings and I believe that Professor Yu did an amazing job in being able to show us different writers, interpretations, and modalities of interpreting [those] experiences,” explained Abbas. “As a reader and a writer, that class along with the readings were really beneficial and something I’ll be going back to in years to come.”

The support of peers, creative mentors, and faculty has been crucial for the success of the First Wave scholars, who have often found themselves facing challenges inherent to studying at a predominantly white institution (PWI) like UW-Madison.

“We support each other through laughing, studying, and traversing this PWI together,” said Leismester.

Echoing that sentiment, Abbas notes, “It’s hard to be a student on this campus right now. This university has a responsibility to support disadvantaged students on this campus, especially those of us who do not fit the assumed criteria of most of the people on the campus. We don’t look like them. We didn’t get here the same way and we have so much more to prove.”

Although there are many obstacles that First Wave scholars face, the mere existence of a program such as First Wave is crucial in making changes to the campus landscape.

“I think it’s really important this program exists, especially in the context of UW Madison being a predominantly white institution, because it is so often the case that the kind of white-gaze assumes diversity is a scarcity mindset conversation or situation,” said Lee. “It’s a question of countering the tokenism that is so often at play in how PWIs approach what diversity is.”



The Studio Showcase: a chance for students to showcase their art

When asked how the larger UW-Madison community can support the program, Lee and the First Wave scholars all had the same sentiment: ***show up.***

Each spring, OMAI organizes the Line Breaks Hip Hop Theater Festival, held this year on April 1-2. Additionally, every first Friday of the month, OMAI runs Just Bust!, an all ages open mic. Currently, open mics are being held online; indeed, the pandemic has made some programming and collaboration more challenging.

“The pandemic has made it difficult to know that there is support and there are people who still care and want to hear us,” said Abbas. “We all know everyone in First Wave but that’s like 1% of this campus — so just having people show up for us and be interested in our work is really important.”

Lee agrees, noting that “Community starts with showing up. Pay attention to what they’re doing, come to their programming, pay attention to their side hustles. So many side businesses have come out of First Wave and some have become giant profitable businesses. Follow them, support them. Be vocal, boost their signal.”

For more info, please visit omai.wisc.edu.

IN MEMORIAM

bell hooks



bell hooks, passionate and powerful Black feminist thinker and teacher, passed away on December 15, 2021. She received her MA in English literature from the UW-Madison Department of English in 1976. Few current members of the English department community were on campus with hooks, yet her influence resonates across our classrooms. Her prolific and wide-ranging scholarship, her service as a public intellectual, and her insistence that education ought to be “a practice of freedom” will continue to inspire and challenge us.

Grace Krewson

Grace was one of my favorite people at UW-Madison. I got to know her when I joined the faculty in 2002, and right off the bat she impressed me with her concern, care, and support for our students. I had many conversations with her about teaching and student success, and I know both that I became a better teacher for it and that students became better students because of her influence. And she made us all better people. She touched so many and she will be missed.

-Professor Russ Castronovo



Former English Department student advisor Grace Krewson passed away on January 26, 2022.

IN MEMORIAM



Eric Rothstein

Eric David Rothstein, the Edgar W. Lacy Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, passed away on September 13, 2021. His publications include five books on British literature from 1660 to 1800 and *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, co-edited with Jay Clayton. During his time at UW, Rothstein chaired the English Department and served as Director of Graduate Studies. He received prestigious fellowships from the National Endowment of the Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies.

Carrie Graves

Carrie Graves took my English 250: Women and Literature course in the fall of 1975, the first year I taught the course. I asked students to keep a journal during the semester in which they should consider themselves the “hero” of their own lives and compare themselves to the “heroes” of the novels we read for class. I had known that Carrie was on the women’s crew team, but when I read her journal at the end of the semester, I was moved to read her account of how her boyfriend was pressuring her all semester to quit crew and devote herself to him. Thinking of herself as the “hero” of her own life helped her to stick with crew. It was thrilling to see her row for a bronze medal at the summer Olympics in 1976!

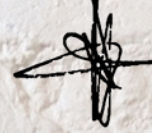


Olympic medalist Carrie Graves, who received a BA in English from UW in 1976, passed away on December 19, 2021.

-Professor Emerita Susan Stanford
Friedman



INSIDE THE CLASSROOM



Our instructors are recognized across campus for their innovative pedagogy. This issue, we're looking at Insect Day in Heather Swan's Ecopoetry course.

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT MORE ABOUT THE COURSE AND WHERE THIS IDEA CAME FROM?

The class looked at a wide range of work, including more traditional nature poems, environmental poems, and ecopoems by a diverse group of poets. Each week, we had a theme, and one week it was insects. Many important insects populations are experiencing a steep decline, partly because they are easy to dismiss or ignore. Lots of people are afraid of insects and don't realize how incredible they are. I assumed the insect poems would be more powerful if they encountered real bugs during class. A guest from the entomology department brought cases of insect collections as well as live insects. It was a great day.

HOW DID THE STUDENTS REACT TO SEEING THE INSECTS AND HOW DID IT AFFECT THEIR INTERPRETATION OF THE POEMS YOU HAD STUDIED TOGETHER?

For the most part, students really enjoyed the encounter with real insects. Many had no idea about their diversity, their beauty and their important roles in ecosystems. Some students were freaked out by the live, very large cockroaches from Madagascar. The awareness of that fear was very useful as we talked about the idea of "pests" in the poems. Once something (or someone) is labeled a pest, it's easier to rationalize harming it (or them). Some of the poems explored the interconnection of all living things, and seeing such a range of insects...from butterflies and bees to beetles and stick bugs...helped them understand their extraordinary complexity and various functions. Plus, it was a great bonding experience for all of us.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE DAY AND WHY?

One woman in the class had been my student in the past. She is a competitive weight lifter, and she is arguably one of the strongest people, both physically and mentally, that I know, but she has always been terrified of bugs. That day she let a very gentle stick insect crawl from my hand onto her arm. Later she thanked me, saying it was a huge moment for her to overcome that fear.



PUBLICATION ROUNDUP

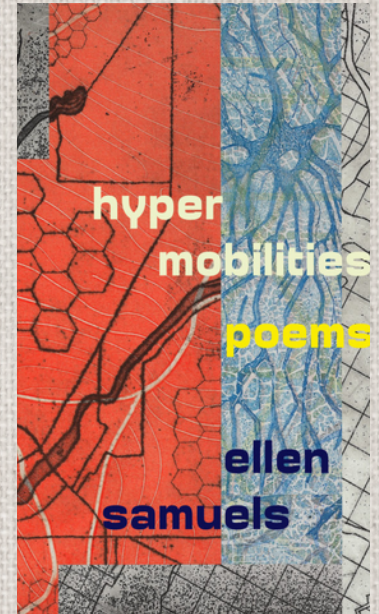
*Curious to see what English department faculty are up to?
Here are some of the books they've published in the past year.*

American Magnitude by Christa Olson



At a moment in U.S. politics when racially motivated nationalism, shifting relations with Latin America, and anxiety over national futures intertwine, understanding the long history of American preoccupation with magnitude and how it underpins national identity is vitally important. In *American Magnitude*, Christa J. Olson tracks the visual history of US appeals to grandeur, import, and consequence (megethos), focusing on images that use the wider Americas to establish U.S. character.

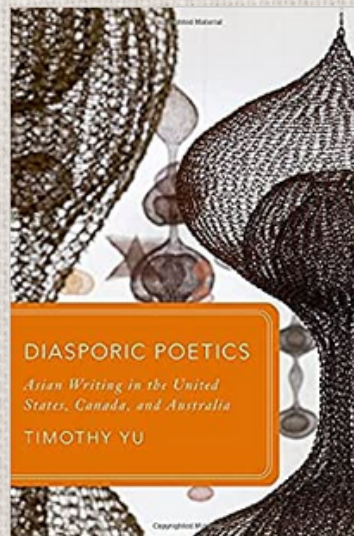
Hypermobilities by Ellen Samuels



Hypermobilities is a verse-memoir in haiku, written over two years of intense engagement with the medical system. Samuels composed these poems in her head while strapped down within MRI machines, in the infusion center with IV needles snaking from her arms, waiting and waiting in white-walled rooms. They are necessarily short, to be written by memory without pen or screen.

Diasporic Poetics by Timothy Yu

This book advances a new concept of the "Asian diaspora" that creates links between Asian American, Asian Canadian, and Asian Australian identities. Drawing from comparable studies of the Black diaspora, it traces the histories of colonialism, immigration, and exclusion shared by these three populations.



Milk Blood Heat by Dantiel Moniz

A livewire debut from Dantiel Moniz, one of the most exciting discoveries in today's literary landscape, *Milk Blood Heat* depicts the lives of Floridians in intergenerational tales that contemplate human connection, race, womanhood, inheritance, and the elemental darkness in us all.



Frédéric
Neyrat
*L'Ange Noir
de l'Histoire
Cosmos
et technique
de l'Afro-
futurisme*

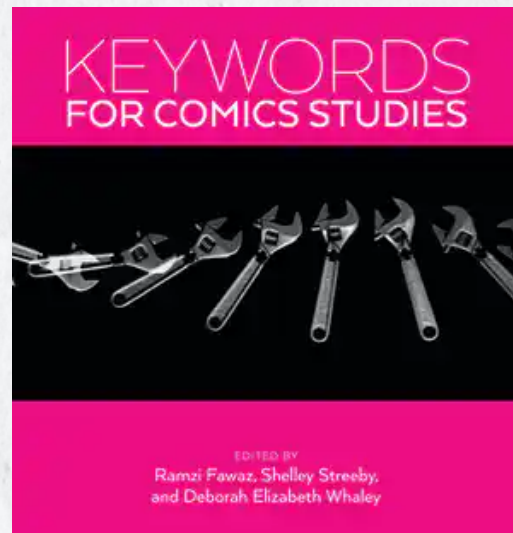
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L'Ange Noir de l'Histoire by Frédéric Neyrat

Analyzing Afrofuturist music, literature, and painting (Sun Ra, P-Funk, Wangechi Mutu), this book (which translates to *The Black Angel of History: Cosmos and Technics of Afrofuturism*) shows how Afrofuturism can cure us of the triple rejection constitutive of the Anthropocene. This book is related to topics discussed in *Alienocene*, a journal that Neyrat edits.

Keywords for Comic Studies co-edited by Ramzi Fawaz

Across more than fifty original essays, *Keywords for Comics Studies* provides a rich, interdisciplinary vocabulary for comics and sequential art. The essays also identify new avenues of research into one of the most popular and diverse visual media of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.



Responding to the Sacred co-edited by Michael Bernard- Donals

Featuring essays by some of the foremost scholars of rhetoric working today, this wide-ranging collection of theoretical and methodological studies takes seriously the possibility of the sacred and the challenge it poses to rhetorical inquiry.

