Alumna Meghan Bliss publishes first book

The Department of English congratulates alumna Meghan Palko Bliss on the publication of her first book. Bliss has had creative work published in Rust+Moth, Southern Women’s Review, A Poetry Congeries, What the Fiction, Charlotte Writers Anthology, and Mary Jane’s Farm, among others. She lives in Coastal North Carolina with her husband, Patrick, and writes at TheBlissfulPoet.com.

McMaster wins Post’s Fiction Contest

Celeste McMaster (formerly Pottier), a graduate of East Carolina’s MA in English, was recently announced as the winner of the Saturday Evening Post’s 2016 Great American Fiction Contest. McMaster, who concentrated in literature at ECU and subsequently obtained a PhD from the University of South Carolina, took the prize with her story “Zelda, Burning.” Read it here. The prize won her publication in the Post and online, and a prize of $500.

Congrats to Margaret Bauer

Professor Margaret Bauer was named a Harriot College of Arts & Sciences Distinguished Professor in August.

Alumni Spotlights

Stacey Cochran (above left) and Gary Redding (above right) are among alumni recently profiled by the Department of English. See page 2.
**Alumni Spotlights**

**Q&A with author Stacey Cochran (‘01)**

**Why did you choose ECU?**

Well, the truth is both of my parents are ECU graduates and met on campus in the early 1960s, and so ECU has been a part of my family my entire life. It was one of my first choices, and I was honored to be accepted.

**What drew you to English as your Major?**

I knew I wanted to be a writer, and the faculty were amazing. As a grad student, the TA opportunities were a draw, and I started to learn the craft of teaching writing with the help of some outstanding mentors in the English Department at ECU.

**What is the best part of the program?**

I think the thing I loved the most was the encouragement and support that faculty in the English Department offered. I was very much finding my way when I was a student, and their guidance shaped who I am as a writer and teacher today.

**What published work (article, book, etc.) had the greatest influence in development of your research interests?**

Getting to know Ron Rash in the past few years has had a tremendous impact on my writing. I thank Amy Rogers (formerly publisher of Novello Festival Press) for first introducing us a good decade or so ago. Ron has become my literary idol in many ways.

**Local alumnus lands book deal**

Landing a book deal was the culmination of six years of hard work and passion for East Carolina English department alumnus Brandon Sneed.

“Getting a book deal with one of the Big 5 publishers has always been a dream,” said Sneed, who describes the project as “a crazy, fun, top-secret project for HarperCollins.”

However, this top-secret project is far from Sneed’s debut as an author. In fact, it’s just one of many projects he’s embarked on as a full-time author and freelance journalist.

“I grew up absolutely loving reading and always messed around with writing funky stories as a kid, and I still love trying to write great stories now,” he said.

**Redding pursues career in law**

When ECU Department of English alumnus Gary Redding took the stage at the English department Commencement in May, he was also just a week away from his own commencement—from law school. He earned a Juris Doctor from the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law on May 15, 2015.

During his address to graduates at the ECU commencement in May, Redding talked about his own life and what his studies at ECU have made possible. After earning his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees here, Redding taught for three years in the Department of English and then in New York City’s community college and public assistance systems. He quickly excelled upon entering law school, winning his school’s Earl H.

See “Redding” page 4 ...

Where has your degree taken you?

We want to know! ECU’s Department of English is now hosting a Spotlight Series about our department alumni. If you would like to be considered for an Alumni Spotlight, please contact Dr. Erin Frost at FrostE@ecu.edu.

Pirate Press: English Department Newsletter
Department accolades

The Department of English is pleased to announce . . .

Associate Professor Will Banks won the 2014-15 Bertie Fearing Excellence in Teaching Award.

Associate Professor John Hoppenthaler and Professor Margaret Bauer shared the Research and Creative Activity Award.

Teaching Instructor Timm Hackett and Associate Professor Amanda Klein were both honored for their service.

Associate professor Andrea Kitta published a new co-authored book, Diagnosing Folklore: Perspectives on Disability Health and Trauma and the University Press of Mississippi sponsored a panel about this book at the American Folklore Society’s annual meeting.


Associate Professor Robert Siegel’s play “Portraits: He said. She said..” was performed at the 19th annual New York International Fringe Festival in August.

Associate professor Helena Feder received the “First Year Faculty Advocate” award from the ECU Office of Student Transitions.

Lead administrator Lindsay Canting, assistant professor Erin Frost, and Writing Center assistant director Erin Herrmann won 2016 Treasured Pirate awards.

In a recent interview, cartoon artist/illustrator/screenwriter Daniel Clowes was asked about Associate Professor Ken Parille’s research. Dr. Parille is the editor of the Daniel Clowes reader, and here is what Clowes had to say: “God, talk about what a great privilege, to have someone like that who pays such close attention that he points out things that I never noticed about my own work.”

On Oct. 22, associate professor Will Banks and doctoral student Stephanie West-Puckett were invited guests on NWPRadio, a program which showcases various work going on across the National Writing Project network. They were invited on to discuss “Pop-Up and Make,” a radical new educational initiative at J. H. Rose high school for which they received a $20,000 grant.

Associate professor Helena Federer and Associate professor John Hoppenthaler won grants through the new Harriot College Faculty Travel Grant Program.

Cochran (from page 2)

How has your major benefited you since graduation?

Well, I’m not sure I can put into words all of the ways it has helped me. I mean, it’s shaped my entire adult life. I met my wife as a result of my success in the program. We have two kids. I taught at NC State University from 2006-2015, and we’ve most recently taken positions at the University of Arizona to begin in the fall (2015).

What are you engaged in now?

My novel Eddie & Sunny launched in March 2015. Ron Rash gave me a nice blurb, and the News & Observer wrote a pretty darn nice review of it. An excerpt of the novel was originally selected as a finalist for the James Hurst Prize for fiction, and the novel itself was selected for publication by Kindle Press as one of the first ten novels acquired via Kindle Scout. I also have a co-authored textbook coming out this fall with Bedford/St. Martin’s Press titled The Insider’s Guide to Academic Writing.
Redding (from page 2)

vis Award for Clinical Excellence in Spring 2014.

During that same semester, he worked as a student attorney in the HIV/AIDS Legal Clinic. In his time at the clinic, he represented several clients including two elderly women seeking estate planning services, performed local and international legal research, produced several high-quality court filings, appeared in court on behalf of an indigent Spanish-speaking client in a family law case, and testified before the Council of the District of Columbia about the concerns of residents at a local homeless shelter regarding the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program.

This spring, Redding has been working as an extern in the congressional office of Congressman David E. Price (D-NC). His duties included assisting Price in his role as the Ranking Member of the House Transportation-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee.

“I attended and reported on hearings, edited speeches, took the lead in researching efforts to update the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program, and much more.”

During his time in law school, Redding also served as a law student attorney in the Housing and Consumer Law Clinic and he completed two summer legal internships.

“I was a legal and policy fellow at the Rural Coalition, Washington, D.C.,” he said. “My fellowships afforded me the opportunity to write and submit written testimony to Congress on behalf of the coalition regarding updating Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act and making the process for reporting voting rights violations more straightforward and practical, conduct research and write policy briefs in support of a ‘full and fair farm bill,’ document oral histories of farmers and farm workers, and much more.”

Redding’s interest in this subject area stems in part from his background. He is a native of Tillery, NC, and a third generation “Tillery resettler.”

He explained, “The Tillery Resettlement was established in 1935 as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal programs. There were 113 New Deal farm projects set up mostly in the south, and the Tillery Resettlement was one of fifteen set up for African Americans to purchase farm land and become independent landowners.”

His background also inspired his dedication to learning.

“My single mother inspired my love for reading and writing at an early age,” Redding said. “I grew up in a home without a bathroom and running water, but our walls were lined with bookcases filled with books rich in all kinds of intellectual and social commentary, and political persuasions. We were regimented to reading aloud for 45 minutes a day from texts by authors as varied as Aristotle, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Zora Neale Hurston. We also wrote on a daily basis about our local community and travel experiences, including our trip to Stockholm, Sweden to see Nelson and Winnie Mandela on the first trip Mandela made outside of Africa following his release from 27 years of unfair incarceration.”

Redding continues to stay connected to his hometown. He currently serves the Chairperson of the Board of Directors for the Concerned Citizens of Tillery (CCT). CCT has been a catalyst for positive social change across North Carolina and beyond, and celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary in 2014. Awards for their work have included the First International Healthier Communities Award from the Health Care Forum and the Natural Community Champion Award from the Conservation Fund.

When Redding first arrived ECU, he majored in criminal justice. Later, he was persuaded by the late Dr. Gay Wilentz to become an English major. Redding earned his B.A. in English, and then his M.A. in English with a concentration in Multicultural Literature.

“After being deprived of opportunities to read literature by authors of color in the public schools I attended, with the exception of Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe in the 10th grade, I jumped at the chance to be immersed in classes on Native American literature, African literature, and other literature by people of color in college and graduate school,” Redding said. “In those classes, students led intellectually stimulating debates and discussions about the inclusion of multiethnic literature in the American literary canon, students presented on violence against women in literature and in society, students from Belize, Central America offered new insights on writing and neocolo...
Department welcomes visiting scholar Dr. Jing Yang

The ECU Department of English welcomes visiting scholar Jing Yang. Dr. Yang is associate professor in the department of English Language and Culture, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China. Her research project is about martial arts cinema in the age of globalization, and she hopes to soon finish several papers on recent Chinese cinema's strategies for commercialization. Dr. Yang will also be available for guest lectures on Chinese cinema.

Congratulations to PhD student Alana Baker, who delivered a well received lightning-style talk at Downtown Dialogues in December at the Greenville Museum of Art.

Winner (from page 1)

The Post reports that the story developed over an eight-year period.

“My American literature professor suggested I write on Zelda Fitzgerald, so she planted the seed, but I didn’t follow her advice until I went to graduate school,” McMaster told the Post. “I started the story in a creative writing class imagining what Zelda must have felt in her last years.”

McMaster also has published in literary journals, including New Delta Review, Dos Passos Review, and Arkansas Review.
Poston publishes poetry

The Department of English congratulates alumnus David Poston on the publication of his poetry collection, Slow of Study. It was published this month by Main Street Rag Publishing in Charlotte.

Poston taught for thirty years in various public schools, at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and at Charlotte’s Young Writers’ Workshop, and he continues to teach occasional creative writing workshops. His previous poetry collections are My Father Reading Greek and Postmodern Bourgeois Poetaster Blues, winner of the Randall Jarrell/Harperprints Chapbook Competition. He lives in Gastonia, North Carolina.

For more information on alumni authors, visit the Alumni Bookshelf page at: http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/engl/index.cfm

Conference presentations abound

Faculty members John Hoppenthaler, Amber Flora Thomas, Donna Kain, Margaret Bauer, Liza Wieland, and Tracy Ann Morse presented at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference in Durham, North Carolina, in November. ECU alumnus Michael Brantley, a graduate of the MA program, also presented at SAMLA.

The Department of English also will be well represented at the upcoming Conference on College Composition and Communication. See page 7 for details of our department’s presenters at this major conference.

Redding (from page 4)

“Students considering coming to ECU to study English will have the opportunity to learn from a diverse and talented faculty, take classes with students from different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, and through hard work can become skillful writers and researchers,” Redding said. “Additionally, students who major in English at ECU can successfully enter any field of endeavor that they choose.”

“Eastern North Carolina is much richer for having a local university that is not only convenient and available to local students, but also brings many parts of the world to the region.”

Snee (from page 2)

Sneed was raised right here in Greenville. He graduated from Barton College in 2009 and moved back to Greenville in 2011 to pursue his Master’s degree at ECU with a concentration in Nonfiction Creative Writing. He said some of his favorite parts of the program were spending time with professors who were as passionate about good writing as he is, and working with other students who were improving their writing—“that was all really fun and invigorating.”

Since his graduation, Sneed has been writing full time as well as teaching writing classes at area colleges. He’s also been publishing narrative journalism for a variety of outlets, including CNN/Bleacher Report, ESPN The Magazine, ESPN.com, SB Nation, Pacific Standard, Outside, and more. His story, “The Prospect,” was named a Best American Sports Writing 2014 Notable Selection.

Besides all that, he’s been writing books. Aside from his current project with HarperCollins, he’s written The Edge of Legend (2010) and Behind the Drive (2015). He has a lot of work to be proud of, and he’s happy with the path he’s chosen.

“IT’s taken tons of time, effort, and sacrifice, and my goal has always been to write stories that entertain and inform, sure, but also offer something that can make people’s lives better. I believe in moving stories that explore the stunning things human beings are capable of.”

Learn more about Sneed’s work at brandonsneed.com.
Want to know what’s going on in the English department? Visit http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/engl/whatsgoingon.cfm

Have news to share? Visit http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/engl/form.cfm