

Pen & Ink: Notes from the NDSU Department of English

The Buzz

Professor Linda Helstern's radio essay on Louise Erdrich was broadcast on Prairie Public Radio's *HEAR IT NOW*, August 22nd, at 3 and 7 p.m. as an enticement to attend the Four Souls



Symposium being sponsored by the North Dakota Humanities Council. This public humanities symposium offered an evening of stories and conversation with some of America's premier writers and poets: Louise Erdrich, Luis Urrea, Robert Pinsky, and Naomi Shihab Nye. Representing the four borders of the nation, the event honored North Dakota writer Louise Erdrich and her work on behalf of Native language preservation.

[Podcasts are available on the Prairie Public Broadcasting archive website.](#)

Dr. Gary Totten is serving as interim head of the Department of Criminal



Justice and Political Science (CJPS) during the 2012-13 academic year. Totten's accomplishments in his service as President of the Faculty Senate and as a member of the University

President's Cabinet, his record of excellence in teaching, research and service, along with his willingness to advocate for the CJPS department, faculty research and pedagogical initiatives while promoting the intellectual and professional development of graduate students, assures Totten's continued success as head of CJPS.

Dr. Bruce Maylath and English PhD Graduate Students, Steven Hammer and Karen Sorensen, will present the panel, "Infusing International Collaborations throughout Technical Communication Programs" at the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication conference September 27-29, 2012 in Houghton, MI. Their presentations discuss the aspects of growing, collaborating in diverse disciplines, and editing translations in the Trans-Atlantic Project. Founded in 1974, the CPTSC brings together directors and administrators from across the United States and increasingly from abroad. The annual meetings follow a roundtable format, emphasizing discussion.



Provost Bruce Rafert announced he has changed the designation of Dr. R.S. Krishnan's position from Associate Vice



President for Academic Affairs to Vice Provost. The change is in keeping with the realignment of the Office of the Provost and is made with President Dean L. Bresciani's approval,

citing Krishnan's significant and increasing contribution to many important initiatives in academic affairs. Krishnan is a professor of English and director of Summer School. He has been with NDSU since 1984.

Dr. Kelly Sassi received a 2012 English Leadership Quarterly Best Article Honorable mention for, "Misgivings and Opportunities: The Common Core Writing Standards," October 2011 issue themed "Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts." The committee liked Dr. Kelly Sassi's piece for its "realistic portrayal of the tensions surrounding the Common Core writing standards." Sassi is an assistant professor at NDSU with a joint appointment in English and education.



Humans, Kenneth Burke said, are symbol making, symbol using animals. Books, I.A. Richards said, are tools for living. The faculty and students in our department prove over and over again the ways

in which an English degree helps us be better symbol making and using animals, better readers of the world.

You will read about their accomplishments in this newsletter, and I am happy to report that, according to the 2011 National Survey of Student Engagement, our senior majors felt like they received an education that would prepare them for a variety of careers; they also felt prepared to tackle complex

real-world problems. We are still looking for more stories about our symbol making and using alumni so we can tell our students more precisely about the kinds of careers our former majors have taken up and the kinds of complex real world problems they have solved. A newsletter is about relationships, not just announcements, and we would love to help our readers connect with one another, former teachers, and NDSU. Say hello if you are on campus for Homecoming and join us for our Second Annual "Let's Hear it for Homecoming" book reading on Oct. 4th.

Kevin Brooks
Department Chair
Kevin.Brooks@ndsu.edu
701-231-7147



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Department Office:
219 Morrill Hall

Phone: 701-231-7143

Tina.Young@ndsu.edu

Michele.sherman@ndsu.edu

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Introducing — Dr. Kelly Sassi



In a typical week, assistant professor Dr. Kelly Sassi might be at Northern Cass School talking to 8th graders about the novel they are reading, at Standing Rock Indian reservation to lead instructors through writing assessment, Skyping with Michigan colleagues about race in the classroom, at the Plains Art Museum working on a grant application, or simply on campus, teaching her courses. As the department's only English education professor, Sassi crosses many boundaries. The core classes she regularly teaches are "Methods of Teaching Writing" and "Methods of Teaching Literature," so she stays in touch with current issues in both literature and composition. She also holds a joint appointment in the School of Education, so she attends faculty meetings in two departments and two colleges.

When Sassi joined the NDSU faculty in Fall 2008, it was a full circle homecoming. Although born in Fargo, she left at the age of two and lived in several Western states before settling for over 20 years in Fairbanks, Alaska, where she enjoyed mountain biking year-round, hiking, and

cross-country skiing. Though she misses the Alaskan landscape, Sassi has continued skiing: she is the advisor for the NDSU cross country ski club and launched elementary and middle-school ski programs in Fargo. She also continued cycling, once pedaling over 5000 miles in Europe. Her other international travels have taken her to her ancestral Finland, to Japan on a teacher exchange, and, most

recently, to Romania and Serbia. But the international has also come home to her since she married an Italian from Torino (Enrico Sassi, also at NDSU), and they are raising their two sons to be bilingual.

Sassi earned her undergraduate degree, teaching certificate, and Master's degree from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, where she also taught English at West Valley High. She received her PhD from University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.

Just as her life has crossed geographical and cultural boundaries, Sassi's research crosses disciplinary boundaries. She studies social justice issues, pedagogical approaches to Native American literatures, fair writing assessment practices, and the writing transitions between high school and college composition. Sassi has co-authored two books on writing on demand and is consultant for NCTE. Her publications span different fields: In education, she has written about teaching of Native American literature for *English Journal* (2008); a more composition-focused piece in the same journal (2011)

was "An Ethical Dilemma: Talking about Plagiarism and Academic Integrity in the Digital Age." On the rhetoric and literature side, she has a book chapter in press called "Feminist-Indigenous Rhetorics of Survivance and Discursive Spaces in S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*." Her recent contribution to research methodology is an extension of "friendship as method" to include mentorship; her article on this methodology will appear in *Qualitative Inquiry* in January 2013.

Sassi co-directs the Red River Valley Writing Project. She has secured a grant to fund the RRVWP 2013 Summer Institute. She also obtained a grant from the National Writing Project for High Needs Schools, which will provide professional development in writing to teachers at the Standing Rock Indian reservation.

Boundary crossing has contributed to Sassi's holistic view of her life and work. She blends research, teaching, and service into her projects. But whether doing research, teaching students, or serving locally or nationally, Sassi is always learning, and that is what she loves to do.

Professor Sassi created a new Young Adult Literature course. The course examines annual Printz Prize and Stonewall Award winning young adult books and will debut Fall 2013.

Growing Together

The Department of English continues to branch out and grow, with the department now employing 78 people. The English Department includes 14 Professors, 17 full-time Lecturers, 9 part-time Lecturers, 2 Professors of Practice, 32 Graduate Teaching Instructors, and 4 remote On-Line Instructors.

The Fall 2012 semester welcomed 12 new Graduate Teaching Instructors, 5 new Lecturers, and Professor of Practice, Emily Wicktor.

Our undergraduate and graduate studies programs are also showing continued success. We currently have 190 students enrolled with declared English Majors, English Minors, and English Education Majors. Graduate enrollment data shows 13 candidates are enrolled in the PhD program and 23 students are enrolled in our Masters programs.

NDSU now requires students to enroll in a first year writing course and later an upper division writing class, and some of the department's growth is a reflection of the increase in the university's student body enrollment.

Get to know the entire department by visiting "People" on the department webpage at: www.ndsu.edu/english.

Summer Successes

Red River Valley Writing Project

NDSU hosted the 2012 Red River Valley Writing Project Summer Institute, held July 16-27 with pre-institute meetings May 18-19 at the Plains Art Museum. Five follow-up meetings are scheduled this fall for the 13 teachers who participated under the direction of NDSU English Professor Kelly Sassi and Grand Forks Central High School Spanish teacher Pam Fisher, who serves as outreach coordinator for RRVWP.



The summer of 2012 was the 13th consecutive year the Red River Valley Writing Project has received funding through the National Writing Project, a network of 210 university sites that aims to increase the quality of student literacy and writing through programs that improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of writing.

Governor's School 2012

2012 marks the fourth successful year of our program and our second year offering a full six-week session. Our number of applicants saw a dramatic jump, with 18 ultimately attending. This made us the second largest GS group on campus (out of five and only Science outranked us).

Our staff included two returning teachers, Davin Wait and Steven Hammer, and a new magazine/tech advisor, Jade Sandbulte. This staff represents a good cross section of graduate students, from first-year Masters, to mid-Masters and late-Doctoral—an important point, since one of the program's objectives is to provide work and experience for department graduate students.

Undergraduate advisor/English 167 instructor Eunice Johnston provided an introductory talk on English Studies as a general field, and several faculty offered invaluable assistance and/or taught full classes or even full days. Students also met visiting scholar/poet Dr. Heather Dubrow, and attended her coffeehouse reading, "Forms and Hollows." All in all, and as borne out by student evaluations, the summer was a runaway success.



2012 Summer Scholars: New Approaches to Genre

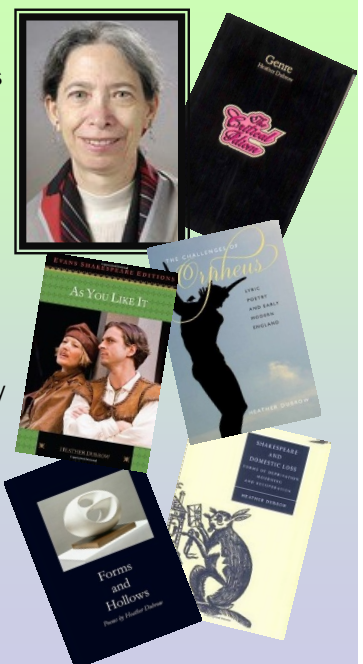
Each year the Department invites a nationally recognized scholar to teach an intensive course in his or her area of expertise. Dr. Heather Dubrow of Fordham University led the fourth session, June 11-15, 2012, "New Approaches to Genre." Dubrow and six students focused mainly on literary texts, especially instances of pastoral, romance, and the sonnet, but also devoted attention to the centrality of genre to many types of discourse.

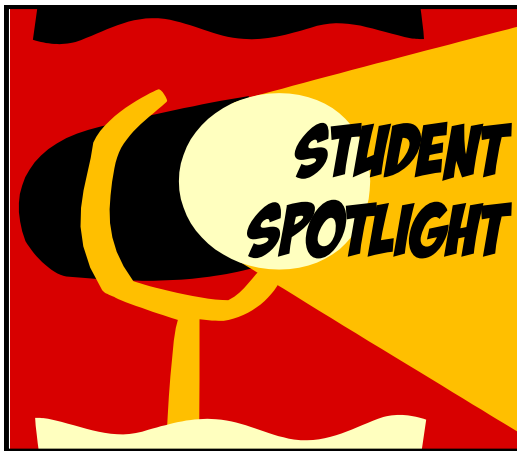
Genre has been a source of debate and on occasion dissension among literary critics, experts in composition and rhetoric, students of film, linguists, and social scientists. Using texts such as Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd" and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, along with the poetry of Wordsworth, Cole and Marvell, students in the course explored the questions:

- ◆ Who creates and defines a genre, and to what ends?
- ◆ What are the potentialities and perils of extending the concept to, say, politics or social institutions like Thanksgiving dinner?
- ◆ How do genres structure various forms of social interaction?
- ◆ How should we approach this subject in the classroom?

Dr. Heather Dubrow — John D. Boyd, SJ, Chair in the Poetic Imagination at Fordham University — is the author of six scholarly books, most recently *The Challenges of Orpheus: Lyric Poetry and Early Modern England* (Johns Hopkins). Her first book, *Genre* appeared in 1982. Dubrow's collection of poetry *Forms and Hollows* was published by Word Press, Cherry Grove collections.

More than 30 people attended Dubrow's *Forms and Hollows* poetry reading, June 13, 2012, at Jitters Coffee House in Fargo. Dubrow's pubic reading was a remarkably humorous and poignant poetic display.





ORGANIZATION: Sigma Tau Delta
NDSU CHAPTER: Omicron Gamma
PRESIDENT: Abby Hammes
VICE PRESIDENT: Kaylee Jangula
SECRETARY/TREASURER: Emilee Ruhland
PURPOSE: Promote literacy through campus and non-campus service projects while maintaining high achievement standards in English studies.
GOALS: Define and ratify a constitution in order to secure full organization status in eyes of NDSU Congress of Student Organizations. Define and plan literacy events for spring semester and recruit new members.
SIGMA TAU DELTA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS: Student members may compete for scholarships and awards. Students can present and attend the Sigma Tau Delta International Conference held in Portland, OR, March 20-23, 2013.

Members have opportunities to get his/her own works published in Sigma Tau Delta journals. Members receive a one year subscription to both Society journals. Professional networking opportunities.

BECOMING A MEMBER: Membership in Sigma Tau Delta is by invitation, extended through a local chapter on behalf of the international organization. Students who qualify for membership must apply through the chapter on their campus. Student membership is available to undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled at a college or university with an active Sigma Tau Delta chapter. Qualifications vary for graduate and undergraduate members, so please contact [Abby Hammes](#) for specific qualification requisites.

EVENTS AND PROJECTS: Membership Induction Ceremony, Thursday, October 5, 2013, in the Memorial Union. **Fargo Early Head Start literacy project** where members will read to the more than 30 children enrolled in Fargo's Early Head Start program.

HISTORY: Sigma Tau Delta is the International English Honor Society and was founded in 1924 at Dakota Wesleyan University. The Society strives to: confer distinction for high achievement in English language and literature in undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies; provide, through its local chapters, cultural stimulation on college campuses and promote interest in literature and the English language in surrounding communities; foster all aspects of the discipline of English, including literature, language, and writing; promote exemplary character and good fellowship among its members; exhibit high standards of academic excellence; and serve society by fostering literacy.

SIGMA TAU DELTA



CHAPTER PRESIDENT:
ABBY HAMMES

CHAPTER VICE PRESIDENT:
KAYLEE JANGULA

More Buzz

Dr. Kevin Brooks was invited by Lutheran Immigration

and Refugee Services to attend a Community Conversation Workshop in Baltimore, September 13-15. Participants included teachers, social service providers, non-profit administrators, and social activists who are working to create welcoming communities for immigrants and refugees throughout the U.S.. Anyone can join the Community Conversation online: <http://www.lirscc.org>



Gary Totten, associate professor of English, recently published the article, " 'Objects Long Preserved:' Reading and Writing the Shop Window in Edith Wharton's 'Bunner Sisters,' " in the Winter 2011 issue of the journal, *Studies in American Naturalism*. In the article, Totten examines the influence of consumer culture on Wharton's depiction of female characters. Totten also presented papers at two recent conferences. He presented "Zitkala-Sa and the Material Cultures of Citizenship" at the American Literature Association conference May 24-27 in San

Francisco. At the conference, Totten also chaired two panel sessions and business meetings for the Edith Wharton Society, which he currently serves as president, and the International Theodore Dreiser Society. Totten was named president of the International Theodore Dreiser Society during its business meeting. Totten attended the "Edith Wharton in Florence" conference in Florence, Italy, June 6-8, where he presented his paper, "The Politics of Affect in Edith Wharton's Travel Writing."



PhD candidate Steven Hammer attended the 2012 meeting of Computers and Writing, May 17-20, 2012, at NCSU in Raleigh, North Carolina. Hammer presented his research, "Ways of (Sonic) Being: Composing and Performing Sonic Rhetorics."

Assistant Professor of English Andrew Mara participated in the 2012 Council of Writing Program Administrators Workshop and Institute: "From Principles to Practice: Using Assessment to Tell Stories about Writing Programs," held in July at University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Andrew Mara is the Director of the NDSU Department of English Upper Division Writing Program.



Alumni in Action

Emily Malsam



SINCE NDSU: After finishing my MA 2004, I taught adjunct classes for NDSU, MSCTC, and MSUM for a year. Now, I am a professor of English—a general title bestowed on all tenured faculty in the California Community College system. I've been at Modesto Junior College in the Yosemite Community College District for seven years, teaching mostly composition courses but also some literature courses. We don't currently offer any purely linguistics courses, but I have found ways to incorporate my love for language—all of its processes, systems, and nuances—into my other courses in a way that makes me still feel tied to the spirit of linguistics. I've also been concentrating on taking classes in areas of interest—Chinese, German, and Korean language classes, Asian History classes, and courses designed to improve pedagogy for online teachers.

MORE THAN A TEACHER: I am currently in my fourth year of Vice President of the Yosemite Faculty Association at MJC, which requires that I fill a few important roles. I am chiefly the grievance officer for any issues or concerns that crop up between faculty and administration, but I also work to find resolution on a number of other issues, including interpretation of our local contract and California education code. Additionally, as a member of our negotiation team, I research working conditions, compensation, and contract language. As a liaison for union faculty, I also work with a great team to participate in shared governance across campus as they relate to union matters. For instance, we work with our district administration to negotiate the

installation and use of security cameras, to develop computer use guidelines, to improve faculty evaluation, and to develop a set of requirements and processes designed to protect tenure, program viability, and district solvency.

CURRENT EVENTS: We live in Modesto—about 1 ½ hours from San Francisco, Yosemite Park, Sacramento, and Fresno—in the Central Valley of California. It's an agricultural community that's become a commuter city for several of our larger, neighboring cities. My husband, Jon, and I have a son named Beckett. He just turned three and he is positively wonderful. We came to California looking for a new community, new perspective on life, and new adventures. We have enjoyed these changes in many ways and tried to take advantage of all that California and our local community has to offer. Our favorite day-trips include the beaches of Half Moon Bay, the shady trails of Caswell Memorial Park, and the train museum in Sacramento.

BRAGGING RIGHTS: Professionally, I am most proud of my time spent developing online classes for my English students. Online classes have changed dramatically since I first began teaching them five years ago, and I have done a great deal of work creating a sense of community, virtual interaction, and a network of helpful resources and activities. Each semester I get closer and closer to the true face-to-face classroom interaction that we, as teachers, thrive on. But, personally, above all other accomplishments in my

life, I am most proud of the amazing little man that we share our lives with. He reminds me of the most important aspects of life and brings more joy to my life than I could have ever imagined.

NDSU'S ROLE: One of the greatest experiences that NDSU provided me, under the guidance of Richard Shaw and others, was the ability to experiment with content, classroom management, time management, and pedagogy in a manner that set me up for real-world success. Unlike many of my colleagues, I had been face-to-face with a room full of students for three years prior to applying for my first full-time job. Additionally, the joy of sitting in a classroom every day with other like-minded people who shared the love of reading and writing, teaching and learning was a great benefit. I could see it on the faces of my professors and on the walls of their offices—they really enjoy their jobs. I have come to expect that from my current job and try to remind my students each semester that they should strive for a job that provides great return on their investment. Finally, Dr. Salting, in his many patient hours of listening to my ideas on syntax and semantics, helped me to establish a certain sense of self confidence that I had worthy ideas to add to the conversation and that with continued questioning I would someday know a little more about what I was talking about.

You can reconnect with Emily via email: malsame@mjc.edu or give her a call at 209-575-6648.

C NDSU Department of English Cosgrove Seminars Presents

Geoff Herbach

Tuesday, September 25th, 7PM
NDSU Memorial Union Art Gallery

Geoff Herbach will read from his latest young adult novel, *Nothing Special*, the sequel to *Stupid Fast*, the story of young Felton Reinstein who is thrust into the role of jock thanks to a late growth spurt. Herbach is the author of the literary novel, *The Miracle Letters of T. Rimberg*, and he teaches creative writing at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

E English Faculty on Chuck Klosterman 2nd Annual "Let's Hear It for Homecoming" Book Event Thursday, October 4th, 7PM 222 Minard Hall—NDSU

Dr. Kevin Brooks, Dr. Melissa Vosen Callens and Sybil Priebe will read from and discuss their papers recently published in the book *Chuck Klosterman and Philosophy*, a collection of 22 academic papers centered around Klosterman's work and ideas. Klosterman, a native North Dakotan, has published several bestselling non-fiction books on popular culture as well as two novels. Currently, he writes the "Ethicist" column for *The New York Times Magazine*.

T Trends in E-Publishing Thursday, November 1st, 7PM Rose Room—NDSU Memorial Union

A panel of writers working in e-publishing will discuss their experiences and current trends in the emerging medium.

Author ML Harveland's e-book, *The Seventh Soul*, was named a 2012 Indie Reader Discovery Award.

Ryan Christiansen is the editor and publisher for Knuckledown Press and an associate editor for New Rivers Press.

ALL EVENTS ARE
FREE & OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC



www.ndsu.edu/english