

Spring 2016



THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Footnotes

From the Chair

Cynthia Burkhead

Spring greetings from the English Department. We are nearing the end of another successful semester, and we are excited to share some of this semester's highlights with you. Inside this newsletter, you will read about what our faculty and students have been up to, as well as some of the programs we have brought to UNA this term. It has been a busy and productive semester, and our summer promises to be just as full! Dr. Peterson will again be teaching and mentoring students in July through the London Study Abroad program. These undergraduate and graduate students will work at the British Library and other locations in London on in-depth research projects. We are also hoping for good news in June from ACHE (Alabama Commission on Higher Education) about our proposed MA in Writing program. We have had very positive responses to this new graduate degree from prospective students, and are ready to begin teaching the courses in the fall.

Fall of 2015 brought a huge increase in freshman enrollment at UNA, which is good news all around. While the English Department had to scramble to provide enough First-Year Composition courses for these students, with a little creativity and a lot of dedication and hard work on the part of our faculty, we managed to find a seat for every incoming freshman. We are told that Fall



2016 could bring an increase of over 30% over last year's freshmen enrollment numbers, and our faculty will be ready to meet the challenge of preparing these students of all majors to be proficient college writers.

Whether you are an alum or friend of the English Department, we hope you will join us at 9am on Homecoming morning in the fall for a breakfast meet and greet reception. You can keep up with this and our other exciting events by joining our Facebook group - UNA Department of English.

Student Spotlight



Graduating senior Kelly Jones is an excellent example of how an English Degree from UNA prepares our students for successful futures. Kelly is a Professional Writing major who is minoring in HCIUX (Human Computer Interaction User Experience). In April, Kelly was hired for a position in Marketing at Cherwell Software in Colorado Springs, Colorado; she will begin her job after graduation in May.

Kelly found the job through an online employment site. The employment process included three telephone interviews, the last of which was with the company's digital marketing manager. Kelly learned that the company was interested in her resume because of her writing abilities. "I believe my degree has prepared me for this position by helping me build a diverse portfolio from the different Professional Writing courses I have taken."

The English Department's goal for our students is to provide them an education that will qualify them for wide-ranging employment opportunities. Congratulations to Kelly, and good luck with your new adventure.

Faculty Notes

In addition to staying busy in the classroom, English Department faculty have been active with their own scholarship and creative projects this academic year. These accomplishments include:

- 4 scholarly articles published
- 3 critical reviews published
- 2 short stories published
- 17 scholarly conference presentations delivered
- 1 invited webinar presentation given
- 4 development programs attended

Included in this impressive list of research and development activities is work on literary juvenilia, prison literature, medieval women saints, Native American literature, television characters, and collaboration in the student writing process.

Our faculty are also engaged in a wide variety of outreach activities. Dr. Lesley Peterson teaches Shakespeare on a weekly basis to Kilby School gifted and talented students. Dr. Cheryl Price, Dr. Brenna Wardell, and Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy have together presented five programs

this year at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library. Ms. Anita Garner has, for the 23rd consecutive year, organized the statewide literary arts contest for the Alabama Writers' Forum under the Alabama State Council of the Arts. Ms. Anissa Graham served this year as secretary for the Association of College English Teachers of Alabama. Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy is in discussion with officials at the Limestone County prison about creating a literature outreach program at that facility, and she also serves a member of the planning committee for the first Shoals Book Festival. Ms. Pam Kingsbury is on planning committees for both the state and local bicentennial celebrations. Dr. Lesley Peterson, along with History Chair Dr. Jeff Bibbee, is organizing an international conference on literary juvenilia to be held at UNA in 2017. This list by no means includes all of the ways that UNA English faculty members give back to the community and the profession, which are many.



Dr. Kat Richards (University Writing Center) and Dr. Tammy Winner presenting research at the 2016 CCCC's Conference

Graduate Program notes



On February 26 and 27, the English Department and the English Graduate Student Organization hosted the 7th Annual Alabama Regional Graduate Conference in English.

This year's conference theme was "UNApocalypse: Exploring Dystopianism in Texts." The two-day conference welcomed over 20 graduate students from schools across the region who presented their original research on subjects as diverse as video games and short stories by Kurt Vonnegut. Dr. David Lavery, Director of English Graduate Studies at Middle Tennessee State University, delivered the keynote address, titled, "The Plan is



Death: Imagining the End with James Tiptree, Jr." Our graduate students are already busy preparing for next year's conference. This event is free to audience members and open to the public.

In addition to the scholarship our graduate students presented at UNA's graduate conference, they have been busy presenting research away from campus as well. Tonia Turner and Jency Wilson traveled to the annual Popular Culture Association conference in Seattle in March where Turner pre-



Mr. Eric Hughes and Ms. Tonia Turner presenting essays at the UNA Graduate Conference

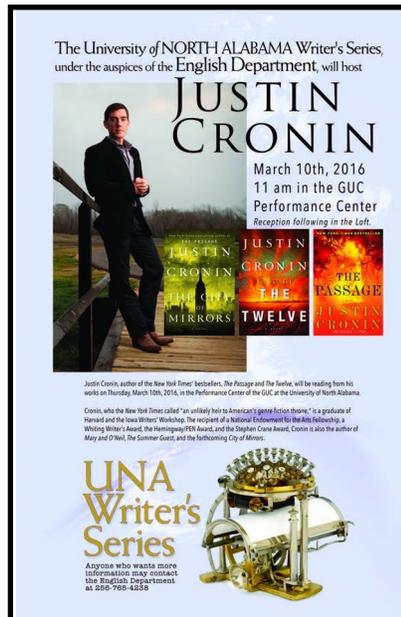
sented on LeAnne Howe, and Wilson presented a paper on T.S. Stribling.

Four of our graduate students are on track to graduate with MA in English degrees in May. Destiny Richards successfully completed her MA exams in British Literature, and Graham Harkness (writing on Stephen King), Eric Hughes (writing on William S. Burroughs), and Jency Wilson (writing on T.S. Stribling), will defend their thesis projects the end of April.

The Writers Series

The 2016 UNA Writers' Series welcomed New York Times bestselling writer Justin Cronin. Cronin read from *The City of Mirrors*, the third novel in his Passage Trilogy, due for release in May. The UNA Performance Center was at near capacity, with over 350 people in attendance for the reading, including a number of students from local high schools and fans from as far away as Nashville. In addition to reading from his work, Cronin answered questions from the audience, many from students interested in hearing about Cronin's writing process.

The Writers' Series, coordinated by a department committee led by Ms. Pam Kingsbury, is the oldest continuous writers' series in the state of Alabama. Past guests have included Nikki Giovanni, Ishmael Reed, and Joy Harjo, to name but a few.



Other Literary Events



Dr. Randall Horton reading from his memoir, Hook.



Dr. Derrick Spires presenting his research on the radical poetry of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

In addition to Justin Cronin, The English Department was able to enhance our students learning opportunities by hosting two speakers this this spring. On February 3, almost 100 students, faculty, and Shoals community members heard Dr. Randall Horton read from his memoir, *Hook*, which “explores his downward spiral from unassuming Howard University undergraduate to homeless drug addict, international cocaine smuggler, and incarcerated felon—before showing us the redemptive role that writing and literature played in helping him reclaim his life” (augurybooks.com/hook-by-randall-horton/). Horton, an Alabama native, teaches at the University of New Haven.

Dr. Derrick Spires, Assistant Professor of English at University of Illinois, read from his research on poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper to a group of faculty and students on March 23. Dr. Spires research interests include Representations of Race and Citizenship and Early African American Literature and Culture.

These learning enhancement opportunities are thanks to the work of new faculty members Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy and Dr. Matthew Duques.



We would like to thank our alumni for your generous support of the English Department. Your donations help us provide excellent programming for the campus and Shoals community, as well as supporting students in their research endeavors. If you would like to become a supporter, please visit <https://www.una.edu/annual-giving/give-to-the-college-of-arts--sciences.html> and select the English Department, or send your donation to Department of English, UNA Box 5050, Florence, AL., 35632



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THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

University of North Alabama
UNA Box 5050
Florence, AL. 35632-0001

Phone: 256-765-4238
Email: english@una.edu



UNA Department of English

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In other news...



With the growth of the English Department comes an increase in the number of students inducted into Sigma Tau Delta, the international English Honor Society. On April 18, the UNA Chapter inducted its largest group in many years.



Undergraduate major Brooke Carlson (left) and graduate student Tonia Turner (above) presented their original research at UNA's 2016 Research Days. Carlson's paper offered an alternative reading of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Turner's poster presentation outlined her work on LeAnne Howe's *Miko Kings*.

The English Department is committed to finding ways to support student travel to scholarly conferences and other learning enhancement opportunities. Help us defray travel costs for our students as well as provide quality programming for them on campus by sending your donation to English Department, UNA Box 5050, Florence, AL., 35630, or visit <https://www.una.edu/annual-giving/give-to-the-college-of-arts--sciences.html> and select the English Department. **Thank you!**