

Fall 2015



THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Footnotes

From the Chair Cynthia Burkhead

Greetings from the UNA Department of English,

Fall 2015 is off to a productive start in the English Department, and we are looking forward to a year of change and growth. Language that does not change dies, and so too will programs die that do not change to meet the needs of our world. We are excited to share some of the Department's recent curriculum additions and changes with you in the "Curriculum Matters" section of this newsletter.

The past couple of years have seen almost as much change in faculty as curriculum. A number of our faculty have retired, but their leaving is bittersweet as we've been able to welcome some impressive

new faculty members into our fold. Last year Dr. Matt Duques (American Literature) and Dr. Brenna Wardell (Film Studies) joined our faculty, and they have brought innovative ideas to their respective areas of study. Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy joined the English faculty this year, and you can learn more about her in an interview on page 2.

We are doing a lot of looking toward the future, but the English Department is also working hard to remember our past and honor the people who have given it such a rich history. One way we are doing this is by trying to maintain better and more frequent contact with our alumni through email, Facebook, and social



events like our Homecoming Breakfast. We would love to highlight English alums in this newsletter as well as share what is going on in your lives, so please keep in touch with us by mailing your news to english@una.edu. We may be contacting you soon to share your stories in a newsletter profile!

I hope you enjoy reading about the English Department in the following pages!

Curriculum Matters

Our programs have changed a lot in the past two years, and we're just now getting the news out about some of those changes. One of our most successful additions has been the HCIUX (Human Computer Interaction/User Experience) minor. Along with four other departments at UNA, the English Department created this minor to address a request by Northrop Grumman, and we've already had our minors find success through internships and employment with the global security company.

We've also added a minor in

Applied Linguistics, which is an attractive option for many majors including Foreign Languages. Students with this minor who complete one additional course can also earn their TESOL Certificate, qualifying them to teach English in other countries. In the past our students wanting this teaching certificate have had to go to other schools or earn the credential online. Now students earning the minor/certificate can be prepared for overseas adventures the moment they graduate!

There are some exciting curriculum changes on the horizon. Last year our British

literature faculty updated and revamped their courses, and this year our American Literature faculty are busy doing the same. Our most exciting news should come in the following months, but for now a hint – it has to do with graduate writing studies!

Many of our curriculum changes occur after hearing from our majors and alumni about courses and programs they would like to see developed. Please continue sharing your ideas with us, and we will continue building one of the best English programs around.

New Faculty—Dr. Katie Owens-Murphy



At what point did you decide you wanted to be an English professor?

I've always loved reading and writing, and I've always loved talking about ideas, but I never really dreamed that I could make a living out of it. I was lucky enough to have some very generous and supportive professors in college who took an interest in me and encouraged me to pursue graduate studies. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be here today. I try to pay that forward with my own students as much as I can.

Have you encountered any culture shock since moving to the south?

I've never been called "ma'am" so much in my life. It seems terribly formal! I'm also taken aback every time I see a Confederate flag hanging out of the back of a pickup bed. Other than that, the shocks have been more like pleasant surprises. People here are very kind and polite, and very generous with their time and conversation. The Shoals region is also astoundingly rich in terms of its background. I find myself incorporating local history into my classroom on a regular basis. Several weeks back, the archivist from the public library led my graduate class on a walking tour of Florence's Civil War sites. Students in my early American literature survey visited Tom's Wall for extra credit during our unit on Indian Removal. I look forward to taking them to TVA sites during courses on American modernism. Everywhere you turn, there seems to be a historical marker. This place is lousy with history, which is a dream for a scholar and teacher of American literature and culture.

Has anything you've experienced at UNA surprised you?

I'm still trying to wrap my mind around that lion exhibit. My toddler calls it "the zoo." This campus is just exquisite. One of the most beautiful college campuses I've ever seen. It's a real pleasure to come to work here every day. I'm a sucker for aesthetics.

What area of your research is most exciting for you?

When I was finishing my doctorate in Pennsylvania, I began volunteer-teaching in prisons, and now I am fascinated by the penal system, which has become one of my favorite areas of teaching and research. I spend a lot of my time reading prisoners' accounts of their experiences under incarceration across a range of genres-- poetry, memoirs, letters, even music. Prison literature is emotionally challenging, but it is also very rewarding. It has made me much more politically and socially conscious in many different directions: more skeptical of government, law, and its institutions, and also more sensitive to issues of race, class, and social justice. I have also become interested in programs such as "Inside-Out" that link higher education to prisons. I hope to foster some of those connections here at UNA.

Retirements

Over the past two years, a number of our faculty have given up the red pen in favor of retirement. Dr. Jim Riser, who joined the faculty at UNA in 1986 and who served as Graduate Coordinator since the creation of the MA in English, retired in June, 2014. Dr. Larry Adams, English Department Chair from 2011-2014, officially retired in August, 2014 after 20 years of teaching, but continued to teach another year in order to endow an graduate research assistantship; a deserving graduate student will be awarded the assistantship beginning in Fall, 2016. After 25 years of teaching service, Dr. Lisa Minor retired this July, but lucky for us, Dr. Minor will continue to teach part-time through the 2016-17. The Department of English is grateful for the many contributions made by these amazing faculty members.



Dr. Larry Adams, Dr. Jim Riser, and Dr. Lisa Minor

“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies, said Jojen. The man who never reads lives only once.” - George R.R. Martin, *A Dance with Dragons*

Graduate Program notes

The English Department's Master of Arts program continues to grow and develop. We offer a range of both traditional and innovative courses, from the History of the English Language and Milton to Trans-Atlantic Literatures and Poe & Friends. While our Literature program remains a strong foundation for teachers and scholars at all levels, we also plan to launch a new graduate Writing program in the Fall of 2016, pending state approval. This new program will include tracks for Creative Writing, Professional Writing, and Rhetoric and Composition. The program has already received significant interest, and we expect it to quickly match the Literature program in size and scope.

Our students are always a source of great pride. In addition to their scholarship in the classroom, many of them have been attending regional conferences to present their work to the broader academic community. They have banded together in an official English Graduate Student Organization, which sponsors academic and



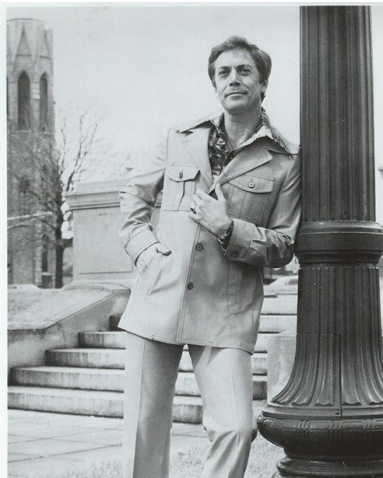
Graduate Students
Katie Todd, Eric
Hughes, Tonia Turner,
Lauren Tubbs, and
Jency Wilson

professional development workshops as well as the occasional social event. The EGSO is also largely responsible for organizing and hosting UNA's own regional graduate conference, now in its seventh year. The theme this year is dystopianism or its converse, utopianism. The conference attracts students from as far away as Virginia, and including Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

In support and recognition of our students' skills and professional aspirations, in 2014-2015 we initiated our first graduate assistantships to provide selected stu-

dents with additional training in the theories and methods of teaching composition at the college level. In 2015-2016 we will select our first Adams-Nordin Graduate Research Assistant, who will aid a selected professor with scholarly research, further honing the student's skills. We will also begin accepting applications for the Albert S. Johnston Graduate Fellowship in Shakespeare Studies. Our students continue to earn our respect, and we are pleased to be able to offer them our support.

Alumni Happenings



The department has been working toward gathering alumni information, and we've unearthed some great department history in the process. We've also located and reached out to a number of alumni from as far back as the 1950s. One of those alums is Robert Scogin, class of 1960, who after graduating from UNA went on to a successful career as a stage actor and is now Artistic Director of Shaw Chicago Theatre. In October, the generosity of the Albert S. Johnston, Jr. Endowment allowed us to bring Robert back to UNA for three days of Shakespeare related activities. On Thursday, October 22,

Robert met with Dr. Peterson's Shakespeare students, then gave an evening lecture on "How I Learned to Think Like an Elizabethan." On Friday, he spent time with the acting students in the Theatre Department critiquing monologues, and he attended their performance of Medea that evening. His visit was topped off to a visit to the Renaissance Faire. The English Department was fortunate to have the opportunity to reconnect with such a talented and successful alum, and we look forward to building a tradition of Alumni Spotlight Events in the future.

Make sure to join our Facebook group at: [/www.facebook.com/groups/UNAEnglishDept/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/UNAEnglishDept/)





ARTS and SCIENCES
University of NORTH ALABAMA

www.una.edu/english

**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

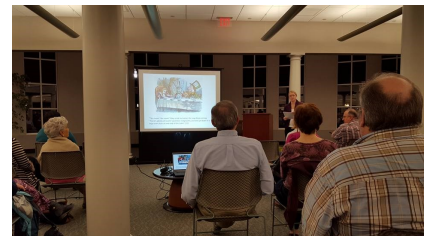
In other news...



Under the direction of English Instructors Alaina Patterson and Latasha Howell, the UNA Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta continues to honor the success in English of UNA students, both majors and non-majors. This photo was taken at last spring's induction into the international English Honor Society.



Three of our graduate students completed requirements and were awarded their MA in English in May. Katie Todd wrote her thesis on elements of the grotesque in Flannery O'Connor's work, Alliyah Finley successfully passed comprehensive exams in British Literature, and Allison Wakelin completed her thesis on the Anti-Tales of Nineteenth Century American Literature.



On November 5, Dr. Cheryl Blake Price gave a lecture at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library on *Alice in Wonderland* in the context of Victorian Culture. The invited lecture commemorated the 150th Anniversary of Charles Dodgson's novel.