By Matt Lessig

This has been a year of change and transition for the English Department. First, as you can tell from the byline of this column, the English Department has a new Chair. I have the distinct honor and decided challenge of succeeding Karla Alwes, who guided the Department with wit, diplomacy, and generosity from 2003 to 2009, and again as Acting Chair in Spring 2010. After enjoying a productive sabbatical during the Fall 2010 semester, Professor Alwes has returned to the classroom, where she continues to be one of our most popular and distinguished teachers.

This year also brought the retirement of Janet Wolf. She concludes a twenty-year career teaching eighteenth-century British literature, Shakespeare, and drama for the English Department. Along with her accomplished teaching, Professor Wolf has enriched many of our students’ experiences with the stage and page by scheduling trips to theatrical productions, organizing students’ Scholars’ Day performances, and, most recently, serving as advisor for the newly founded Shakespeare Club.

Another dramatic change to the Department was the retirement of its longtime secretary, Karen Knapp. It is a commonplace of academic life that departments are run not by their Chairs or their faculties, but by their secretaries. For fifteen years, Karen brought order and balance to our Department. Through her poise, good humor, and quiet efficiency, she helped a generation of students and faculty to navigate the campus bureaucracy while enabling three Chairs to present themselves as competent administrators.

Even as we regret the loss of these longtime members of our department, we welcome the addition of new members. We have been very fortunate to add Molly McGowan as the new English Department secretary. Molly joins us after seventeen years at Binghamton University, where she worked most recently as a senior consultant at the Center for Quality. In just a few months, she has already made herself an integral and indispensable member of the English Department.

Also, after a two-year hiring freeze, this year we have had the opportunity to run searches for two new faculty members in Professional Writing and Adolescence Education. We expect to conclude these searches in the spring and welcome our new faculty members in the fall.

Despite these many changes, much about the English Department remains the same. Our faculty continues their work as dedicated teachers and active scholars (including one very promising professor, Van Akin Burd, who published work simultaneously in two different journals this year). And our students continue to read and write, to explore their world and fashion their places in it through close engagements with language, text, and rhetoric.

Thoughts and Recollections on Being an English Major in the 1970s

By Charles-Eric Gordon

Although I have long looked back at my years at Cortland as a liberal arts English major with great nostalgia, I have to admit, when I arrived on campus for the Fall semester of 1970, I felt like a cross between an anthropologist and a space alien.

Here I was, seventeen years old, an avid reader of fiction, poetry and social science books, surrounded by Physical Education majors (the Jocks) and their cousins, the Health and Recreation majors. Many of them were intelligent and quite friendly to a non-athletically inclined guy from Long Island who walked around talking about Allen Ginsberg, non-mainstream music and trying (Continued on page 2)
Being an English Major at Cortland in the 1970s cont.

As an attorney and investigative counsel, I have continually applied what I have learned both of literature and Socio-Linguistics in understanding and dealing with people of all kinds.

Charles-Eric Gordon pictured above.

To find a chess game. Most of these fellows were busy participating in, talking about, watching and always thinking about sports. They were also drinking a lot of beer (the drinking age was eighteen then), which I willingly joined them in doing.

These young men and women were different, though. It wasn’t just that the guys wore blue Phys-Ed uniforms and the non-majors wore red; they also weren’t crazy about English courses, English majors, or other non-jocks. Perhaps this was because of the dreaded English 101 introductory course that even they had to take. Many of them were terrified of this class (so too were numerous humanities and social science majors).

While the “artsy-fartsy,” “hippie-pinko” types, as many of the jocks considered us, were involved with student activities such as The Hilltop Press, which was our excellent campus newspaper, or Transition, the literary publication, the Physical Education majors, non-major athletes (also qualifying as Jocks) and their kindred were at sporting events or at bars such as the Tavern, the Huddle or the Mug, which one might say were the prototypes of today’s “sports bars.” While some nasty fights would break out in these bars, the English majors and many other non-jock types would be drinking (and enjoying the excellent pizza and Italian dishes) at the Hollywood on Groton Avenue.

The most vicious activities that I ever personally witnessed at the Hollywood were heated debates, often among theatre majors. Arguments pertained to dramatists and occasionally politics or philosophical discussions between liberal arts majors in general. These differences of opinions often took place over pizza and dark beer, a combination that I still love well into middle age.

Not only did I personally study literature with great professors such as Robert Rhodes, Del Janik, Eberhard Alsen, Patricia Shedd, Joel Shatzky and several others, but I also learned Socio-Linguistics, taught mainly by the late Robert Cromack. While the study of literature revealed many universalities of the human race, socio-linguistics, a sort of hybrid between English, Sociology and Anthropology, taught, among other things, that language mirrored culture. To fully understand a culture or society, people have to look at their language and literature (and vice versa). As an attorney and an investigative counsel, I have continually applied what I learned both of literature and Socio-Linguistics in understanding and dealing with people of all kinds.

My education in liberal arts English (and to some extent as a History minor) instilled in me a lifelong love of learning and appreciation not only for the written and spoken word, but laid a foundation for appreciating and trying to understand not just English speaking societies but all cultures. Cortland helped me hone my critical thinking and sharpen my writing skills. These are tools that I try to improve daily, almost forty years after graduation. I know that what I learned in terms of critical thinking, expressing myself in writing and speaking and in problem solving helped in my being admitted to Brooklyn Law School, from which I received my Juris Doctor degree in June of 1979. At the very least, my Cortland English liberal arts experiences have influenced me to become a lifetime student of language and all humanities as well as society in general.

I have spent virtually all of my thirty-one years as a practicing attorney engaged in “investigative law,” which in my case involved locating missing people such as heirs, beneficiaries, shareholders, witnesses, defendants and other absentees, especially those who have not been seen or heard from for decades or about whom little information is available. This is quite a different career choice than those made by the English Education majors who have streamed out of our school, but a satisfying professional adventure nonetheless.

Incidentally, several of the law enforcement and investigative people that I have worked and come into contact with were Physical Education majors at various colleges. I guess that being a liberal arts major at Cortland also taught me how to coexist with others with different viewpoints and often learn from them as well. I also now enjoy detective stories and police procedurals more than ever.
A Fond Farewell to Professor Janet Wolf

By Karla Alwes

Janet Wolf came to Cortland to become the English Department’s 18th century literature scholar in 1992. As of January 2011 Dr. Wolf left her long-held position for discoveries to come. (She reports that in 1992, as now, a state budget crisis was affecting SUNY; she is sorry that she both arrived and left during such painful economic times.)

During her tenure at SUNY Cortland, Dr. Wolf happily introduced students to the words (and worlds) of Shakespeare, as well as the often acerbically witty writers of the Age of Satire and the playwrights of the Restoration era. Dr. Wolf’s teaching skills did not begin and end at the door of the classroom, however. Wolf and former SUNY Cortland Shakespearean scholar and colleague Alan Hager introduced the Harlotry Players, a theatrical troupe made up of students who produce different scenes from Shakespeare in a much-anticipated event on the Scholars’ Day stage every year. In more recent years English colleague Jaclyn Pittsley has worked with Wolf on the Scholars’ Day project, and, Wolf says, has helped to inspire its continuation. The collaboration of professors and students makes the plays come alive every year to audiences of faculty, students, and community. Wolf believes she learned as much as the students did while preparing and rehearsing for the yearly stage productions, and the audience members who saw Shakespeare re-formed in the talented and creative hands of her students recognize that “learning” does indeed come in many forms.

Dr. Wolf thinks it was inevitable that she would become a college English professor because her father taught at the University of Rhode Island for 40 years. But while a child she aspired to her mother’s profession, that of a ballet dancer. (Or, Wolf tells me, the Queen of England - - when a vacancy occurred in that position.) There were very few jobs for women at that time, and aside from the Queen of England, even fewer role models.

Entering UC Berkeley in 1961, Wolf planned to major in French and work with the State Department or the United Nations. But then, during her freshman year, she read the 18th century political and satirical masterpiece, Gulliver’s Travels. The following day she went to the Administration Building and changed her major to English. The rest is 18th century history.

Janet Wolf’s husband Larry has been a source of inspiration and encouragement throughout her career, from her first job in the central New York area, as an adjunct faculty member at Le Moyne College in Syracuse. While there, she watched the other (mostly male) professors closely, and eventually said to herself, “I can do that too.” It is at this time that she entered the PhD program at Syracuse University, and her career as 18th century literature and drama scholar at SUNY Cortland ensued.

Janet and Larry Wolf have a son, Alan, and two grandchildren, Hannah and Parker. The singular joys of family life were tragically tempered, however, when Fred Wolf, Janet and Larry’s son and Alan’s younger brother, died at the age of 21 from leukemia. In Fred’s memory and honor, the Wolf family and friends helped to raise enough money for the penguin exhibit at the Syracuse zoo. Fred always liked penguins because they are “funny,” Larry Wolf says, “and Fred was funny too.” The zoo’s penguin exhibit is now a reality, and, as the Wolf family says, is enjoyed by the public because “it means so much to find someone who can always make you laugh.”

Janet and Larry will travel during retirement, beginning with a trip to the Galapagos, Machu Picchu, and the Peruvian Amazon. Before she leaves, though, Dr. Wolf has a message for the students who have been such a large part of her life: “If I could say anything to my former students besides the fact that I love them and miss them, it would be don’t take SUNY for granted. Think about what SUNY Cortland has meant to you, and then tell your legislators and the governor and your friends and neighbors that there are some things worth paying taxes to support, like public higher education.”

Well put, Dr. Wolf. The Queen of England could not have said it better. Bon voyage.
“[Do you remember when] Students’ grades were distributed by little white cards ad grades were sent home to parents?”

By Robert Rhodes

As the English Department’s unofficial historian - - an association stretching from January 1958 to the present - - Robert Rhodes wonders if you’ll remember when - -

* the English Department faculty held colloquia on their research interests and students were invited?
* the College had one (that’s 1) dean?
* going to college meant taking one truck?
* instructors in the English Department regularly taught 15 hours a semester?
* there were no coed dorms?
* English Department offices were located in the Gym Annex, a ramshackle wooden building in space now occupied by a parking lot?

faculty were expected to - - and did - - dress in jackets, shirts and ties, regular trousers/dresses or skirts, while students were advised to pay attention to their "Professional Attitude" (and attire)?

* student lockers lined the basement halls in Old Main?
* the troubled days and weeks and months and years when students and faculty joined their colleagues nationwide in protesting the Vietnam War, culminating in campus riots and shutdowns over the Kent State killings?
* there were Saturday morning classes?

* the Beta Directory (25¢) listed the name, address, and phone number of every student?
* there was no tuition?
* the Christmas break was two weeks, followed by final exams for fall courses, a few days off, then spring classes began?
* duplicating meant either mimeographing or dittoing, the latter meaning purple and a quick and cheap high from duplicating fluid?
* the singing of Christmas carols in the Old Main entrance before Christmas break?
* Brown Auditorium (before it was Brown) was home to Moving-Up Day, Beta Frolics, and Sartorial Slants (and what were they? ? ?)

* composition courses required 8,000 or more words and at least four student-instructor conferences?
* sub-basement in Old Main was designated as a bomb shelter?
* 108 Old Main - - now the main office of the Psychology Department - - was the student lounge, complete with a fireplace that’s still there?
* commencement took place in mid- to late June while today it’s a month earlier?
* bells rang in Old Main to signal the beginning and end of classes, and densely packed halls could take 10 minutes to negotiate?

* another sort of bell - - the carillon - - often punctuated the air with melodies for such occasions as Christmas and St. Patrick’s Day?
* many of Old Main’s stairwells were occupied by specially constructed faculty offices?
* the English Department consisted of an average of 15-20 fulltime faculty a semester, while today’s roster sees 15 full timers and 31 adjuncts?

* there were no graduate programs in Arts and Sciences - - indeed, there was no Arts and Sciences division?
* the first English Department major came in the late fifties and was Early Secondary English?
* there was no Miller Building to obstruct the view as one made one’s way up West Court Street and around the elm-lined drive to Old Main?

* the College Bookstore and snack bar were in one basement corner of Old Main?
* the College cafeteria was in the opposite corner and was a gathering place for faculty, staff, and students?
* the College’s library was located in one not particularly large space on the second floor of Old Main?

* English Department faculty gave readings in Brockway Hall’s Jacobus Lounge, one notable occasion seeing

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**You Must Remember This: Cortland Over the Years cont.**

- Hamlet’s bedroom scene enacted by Robert Rhodes as Hamlet and Alice Kamin- 
sky as Queen Gertrude?

- students taking a novel course were routinely expected to read 10-12 novels?

- students’ grades were distributed by little white cards and grades were sent home to parents?

- the student newspaper, now the Dragon Chronicle, was the Hilltop Press?

- one night watchman took care of the duties now in the hands of University Police?

- smoking anywhere and everywhere - - classrooms, too - - was acceptable?

  As the song has it, "The way you wear your hat,/ The way you sip your tea,/ The memory of all that, / No, no, they can’t take that away from me." Perhaps these recollections will stir a few of your own. If so, why not jot them down and send them off sometime to newsletter editor Vicki Boynton?

**Impressions of the Department from Current Students**

**Adam Ferguson** (MA ENG 2012)

“Surreal is the best word I can think of to describe my experience in the MAT program. Over the past two semesters, I have been exposed to so many people and concepts. So much so, that I have taken to calling the program “Education Boot Camp.” Its statewide reputation for training English educators was what first attracted me to SUNY Cortland. Bearing that in mind, it has been my distinct pleasure to study and work with Prof. Mary Kennedy for both semesters (ENG 504/505 and AED 663), particularly because she is a genius at masking criticism with praise: picture sitting in her office, and she says to you “Of course you’re going to get an A on this assignment, here’s how you can revise it to get it to the A level.” She has also taken time to personally work with me to prepare work outside of class for submission and eventual publication.

Never mentioned in the brochures is the fact that English Education students have to learn a completely new language of jargon and abbreviations in order to teach. Prior to coming here, I was completely unaware of the meaning of IEPs, “6+1” rubrics, or even “Sparknotes.” (True story: I shocked one of my classmates when I leaned over and asked him what “sparknotes” were. I just remember reading the books.)

Being a part of this program has given me the chance to work with future teachers who value the written word as much as I do; those who have “a long-standing love affair with the English language and literature.” If our profession is to survive the current onslaught of tests, “standards,” and “teacher accountability,” we must learn to adapt to new literacies and new literatures. We must be the standard-bearers for innovative instruction and students who want to learn and communicate effectively. Every morning, I receive an e-mail digest from NCTE filled with nervous hand wringing from all over the nation – what is to become of English education? The answer is simple. Here at SUNY Cortland, land of the aspiring teachers, a small group of committed literature scholars have gathered to learn how to engage public school students in new ways of reading texts and reading the world.

**Dustin Bush** (2012)

Like many recent graduates, I left an undergraduate program at a different institution that I felt was lacking in the practical training and internship experience that I needed to become an expert in my field. Compared to my previous undergraduate experience, the Masters of Arts and Teaching (MAT) Program at SUNY Cortland is much more rigorous; I find that it challenges me daily. Nevertheless, I know it will lead me to success as an educator.

Since the job market has become increasingly competitive, I feel that it is crucial to become part of a graduate program that produces results. The MAT Program at SUNY Cortland provides practical and theoretical instruction from adept instructors as well as practical training inside high school classrooms. Consequently, I feel increasingly proficient and confident in English. After I leave SUNY Cortland, not only will I have the education necessary to teach competently, but I will also have experience teaching in secondary classrooms.

I would like to give a special thank you to the English Department and Field Placement Office at SUNY Cortland, as well as my host teachers for the guidance and support they have provided me thus far.

The MAT Program provides a structure where committed students can succeed. Although it does not afford the freedom of undergraduate programs, this program molds graduate students into specialists in the field of English Education. The MAT Program is

(Continued on page 6)
Impressions of the Department cont.

“The writing techniques, assignments, and feedback that my professors have introduced and provided have encouraged my growth as a writer, person, and student. What they have taught me is invaluable.”

Brittany Rood (2012)

In just three years as an English major at SUNY Cortland, I’ve become acquainted with an impressive list of famous authors: Shakespeare, Chaucer, Woolf, Frost, and countless others. As I continue to learn more about them through mutual friends and my professors, my relationship with myself has prospered too. Each English and AED course has contributed to my passion and has undoubtedly influenced the decisions I have made as well as the roles I play as a writer.

I have grown to realize that what has drawn me to the English program is writing. Though the heavy amounts of reading have been thought provoking and engaging for the most part, I find the writing activities most appealing and fulfilling. Prior to becoming a SUNY Cortland student, I had recognized my interest in writing; however, I had never taken the chance to reflect upon the reasons that I was attracted to it.

My English professors have, perhaps unintentionally, made me acknowledge why writing has stayed with me and has been significant enough to lure me from my initially intended career path. My passion to write is all about the challenge and the productive, satisfying feeling I get after I successfully complete a piece. The writing techniques, assignments, and feedback that my professors have introduced and provided have encouraged my growth as a writer, person, and student. What they have taught me is invaluable. From learning how to improve my writing, benefit from constructive criticism, and express myself through the typing of keys or grasping a pen over a sheet of paper, these skills will travel with me far beyond my time at Cortland.

My experience as an English major has been enlightening. I’ve not only become well read and knowledgeable, but I have learned that passion will ultimately lead you where you belong. For me, I chose journalism rather than English education. I would like to credit SUNY Cortland’s English department for helping me recognize the career path that I have suppressed for too long and for fostering my passion for writing. The leaders of this major continually inspire me.

Voices of Professional Writing Majors

Heather Connelly (2011)

I am a senior Professional Writing major. Last fall, I decided to add a Communications Studies major. Since I hope to become a magazine editor after college, I think the addition of a Communications major will be useful.

When I entered SUNY Cortland three and a half years ago, it was because of the Professional Writing program. When I was looking at colleges, I didn’t want to leave home. For me, home is in Rochester, so I figured that there would be plenty of options and opportunities for me there; I was wrong. As it turned out, there was nothing like the Professional Writing major at this college. I was impressed by the breadth of writing I would be engaging in. I was terrified and excited. At the time, I only knew that I enjoyed creative writing.

The Professional Writing program has taught me

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about almost every kind of writing I can think of. It has made me conscious of genres. Before I entered college, I only saw myself as a creative writer. I felt discouraged about my future. Now I realize that I could be happy not only as a writer, but as someone who pursues writing-related fields (such as editing). I feel the dual major has helped me to think outside the box.

Corey Hutchinson (2011)
Being a Professional Writing major at SUNY Cortland makes you a rare commodity, one of about twenty-five. In a school populated by over 7,000 students, the majority of whom are Childhood Education and Physical Education majors, you are an outcast. When you tell people what your major is, they tend to look at you with a blank face for about 10 seconds before asking just what in the hell a PWR major does. And even if you happen to deliver the lengthiest and most in-depth explanation possible, they cannot possibly relate to you.

Your desire to write and create is a rarity in this world. Your originality will serve you well once you leave this place, but it won’t be easy. Why? Because you didn’t attend the University of Iowa. You didn’t bother applying to NYU or Boston University because you never could have afforded it. USC and UCLA were too far away. You’ve chosen to attend SUNY Cortland, a tiny state school that few outside of New York have ever heard of, a school where the most noted alumni happen to be a professional wrestler named Mankind and a hit-or-miss comedian named Kevin James (who didn’t even graduate).

Ninety percent of this school’s population may seem to be the exact same person to you. The faculty may not be loaded with Nobel Prize winners, but you cannot forget that you are not the only outcast in this snowy New York college town. There are about two dozen others experiencing the same feelings you are. And believe it or not, almost all of them are truly spectacular writers. Every single English and PWR professor is willing to do whatever it takes to push you to the next level.

So you’ll endure the endless student stories populated by “OMG’s” and “Bro’s” that will surely assault your ears over the four long years. And you’ll endure your status as an outcast because you’ll know that this school, its professors, and its other outcasts have made you better.

Philip Bolton (2009)
Whew. I finally finished my master’s degree. *WIPES FOREHEAD* Can I go back to PWR now?

Don’t get me wrong, being a librarian should be awesome and everything, but nothing compares to being a PWRer. For example, I miss being able to take my clothes off while I read. I miss the Raquette Lake ban because we were too awesome for nature. At library school, nobody takes their shirts off or gets banned from anything. BORING.

I miss a lot of things, and I want to follow up on the wisdom that Patrick Berlinquette recited in the last newsletter. I started a screenplay after my sophomore year, a few months before I studied abroad in London. I quenched a great thirst while I researched screenwriting, bought the software, and prepared characters to do stuff. By my senior year these characters had accomplished a lot. They were making each other

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Senior Zach Young reading an animated piece at Scholar’s Day.

Voices of Professional Writing Majors cont.

laugh, breaking each other’s hearts, and more importantly making me happy. Sometimes I would get stuck, and the monster we all call a muse would descend to poke at my characters.

And then I graduated from SUNY Cortland. I didn’t get into that MFA program. I panicked, but I found a way to sustain myself - something that Dr. Franke stressed in senior seminar. Library school. So like books and shushes and stuff? No. More like a more interesting alternative to being homeless with $60,000 of debt.

I’m happy for any of those, like Patrick, who find jobs writing after PWR, but I don’t need to write at my job to be happy. Of course while I’m in school I’ve had to suppress the monster whenever it comes tapping at the window, but I take notes and I wait. I wait for the moment I start my first job. I wait for the monster to crash through the window.

Although I diverged from the writing path, I’m equipped with the compass and map to bring me back, when the time is right.

Faculty Reading Recommendations

Mary Kennedy

After reading Roberto Bolaño in the New Yorker, I submerged myself in the 900 pages of 2666. The novel is surreal, terrifying, and grotesque. It is divided into five novellas. The first introduces four academics who search throughout Europe and Mexico for an elusive author named Benno von Archimboldi. In the second segment their quest brings them to Santa Theresa, a fictionalized version of Ciudad Juárez in northern Mexico. The middle book focuses on a New York City sportswriter who is covering a story in Santa Theresa. The fourth book is a series of forensic reports cataloguing the brutal, unexplained murders of hundreds of young women, many of whom worked in the maquiladoras in Ciudad Juárez. In the final novella the true story of Archimboldi is revealed. Bolaño is a critically acclaimed writer, and 2666 has been called “the finest novel of the present century.” It is not light reading. Save it for a summer when you have lots of time.

Anne Wiegard


Just in case there’s anyone out there who has not already been sucked into reading the wildly popular posthumous Swedish saga by feminist Stieg Larsson, I am here to tell you that the novels are not only best sellers, but well worth reading by those with high literary standards who enjoy poetic justice. On the recommendation of family members I visited over the winter break, I opened the first title and ended up reading all three novels in rapid succession.

The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo starts off with about ninety-five pages of exposition that will have you doubting my endorsement. Stay with it. You will suddenly find yourself hooked by the mystery Mikael Blomkvist reluctantly agrees to investigate, the decades ago disappearance of a teenage heiress. His archival research and interviews of the parties who were originally involved makes for fascinating twists and turns and seeming dead ends that will keep you guessing. The strange anti-social sidekick he partners up with, Lisbeth Salander, is a protagonist like no other in contemporary fiction. The duo does solve the mystery before the first novel ends, but new doors are opened along the way that propel us through the sequels to the gratifying end of the trilogy.

Perhaps the most engaging aspect of the trilogy is its detailed rendition of life in contemporary Sweden. You will feel as though you’ve had a month long vacation immersed in the landscape, cuisine, social mores, and current events of a culture most of us will never experience in person. Over the course of the suspenseful unraveling of the interwoven investigations, important moral and politi-

(Continued on page 9)
Faculty Reading Recommendations cont.

cal issues emerge that all the citizens of the developed world are all too familiar with: violence against women, corporate greed and corruption, and abuse of power.

Readers like myself who felt a bittersweet satisfaction approaching the end of the third novel, will be happy to hear that a nearly finished fourth novel is rumored to have survived in the custody of a Larsson intimate, and we may see it published. Film versions are also available. The trilogy has been dramatized in three movies by a Swedish director and cast, and the inevitable Hollywood remake of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* will be released later this year, directed by David Fincher and featuring Daniel Craig as Blomkvist, and Rooney Mara as Salander.

**David Franke**

Last semester in *The Evolution of Writing*, a course stocked with PWR seniors for the most part, we studied the development of writing as a technology. Our premise was that every new technology for language has deep personal and cultural ramifications: it changes who we are, what we know, and how we know. This semester-long discussion started with the Sumerians' cuneiform tablets, examined Walter Ong's theories of writing and cognition (all good, he says), leapt to Socrates' pointed lamentation about the corruption of writing and the incunabula, scrolls, codices, ancient Irish scriptorium and ancient libraries. We biked our shins on Gutenberg's fancy wine press, studied the rise of technical writing and intellectual communities around books, and then — with Marshall McLuhan, more Walter Ong, and Neil Postman — came up against the computer age. Neil Postman's Socratic distrust of new media came into play for us through his *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, but really came into focus with Nicholas Carr's provocative book, *The Shallows* (2010). He argues that we are becoming increasingly incapable of sustaining attention and using judgment when immersed in post-book new media. His lamentation — which is more nuanced and subtle that it might at first appear — gave me an idea. If it's true what Carr says that we are becoming increasingly inept with argument and ideas, then let's put it to the test. I called Laura Gathagan in the Faculty Development office and she graciously agreed to provide books to the campus community. The demand was so great we had to reorder to accommodate the faculty and students who wanted to join. In the end we held two small book discussion groups, one on the first half of the book, and another a week later. Between these two bookends my Evolution students mentored and monitored an online discussion about the book (the irony that we were holding an online conversation on the demise of book-based learning was not lost on them). As you might expect, I was a little uncertain about what to expect from the first face-to-face meeting. Would my students read the book well? Would they be up to speed — or defensive? Would faculty read the book as a condemnation of all that is changing and degrading in Western culture?

I was amazed and thrilled. My students, some of whom seemed chronically ambivalent about school, rose to the challenge. I remembered several key moments: in one, my student, a bright but uncommitted young woman, started to make eye contact for the first time that semester. She listened carefully as a faculty member made a point about how people can't follow an argument well. In response, this student interrupted the professor — this is perhaps even harder for a student than it is for us! -- and said "Yes, I hear what you are saying. But if you will turn to page 41," here she paused to run her finger down the page to the place where she had highlighted the passage, "he is pretty clearly saying that we can still argue," and then she proceeded to read the passage. I was thrilled. She had found a way to take the role of authority over this text, to listen and believe what her interlocutor was saying, and then to doubt it and find evidence. Her authority wasn't pedantic or loud. She just found this book to be a powerful platform from which to reflect on the nature of human communication and understanding in a post-paper age.

There were many moments like that, but I won't go on. The true center to this event was that we enjoyed each other's company. Faculty and staff from Education, Philosophy, English, the ASC Bookstore, Women's Studies, Psychology, Memorial Library, and Geology were represented, and as one professor put it, "This is the first time in the ten years that I've been here that I actually sat down and discussed ideas with faculty and students outside my discipline." It was, truth be told, my first experience of it as well.

So I recommend the book. It

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shook us up, and we all left, I think, with a more nuanced understanding of the ways that new media are infiltrating our consciousness, abandoning certain citadels and taking new ground we didn’t know was fertile.

**Victoria Boynton**
Over Spring Break, I read *The Lord of Misrule*, last year’s National Book Award winner, and I’ve got to say, it’s the best book I’ve read in a long time. Talk about voice! Jaimy Gordon has the ear and creates voices in crafted prose so beautiful you want to read whatever page you’re on again. It’s got a wonderfully seedy side—a race track. And it has betting. Lots of betting. And horse flesh and human flesh. As the New York Times blog says of the award-winning author, “Gordon’s was a classic underdog tale, about a little-known writer with a little-seen book who overcame long odds to capture the prize and, at least for one night, revel in the glory (or swoon out of disbelief).”

Marilyn Robinson’s novel *Home* is also an amazing book. Give us the prodigal son with whom we fall in love. Give us his family. Give us the suspense of dysfunction. What a story it is!

“My students continue to be fabulous (thank you), and I had particular fun with my graduate Middle English class because we ended the term with some medieval food and medieval book-making (not to be confused with gambling).”

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**Faculty Mosaic**

**Karla Alwes**
returned in January from a fall semester sabbatical. Her sabbatical project is titled “Romantics With a View: The City’s Effect on 19th and 20th Century Writers.” Professor Alwes is happily back to teaching this semester, while working on the final editing and publication of her sabbatical project.

**Victoria Boynton**
Professor of Professional Writing, is happy to have hired a new colleague in the field of New Media. With David Franke and Kim Stone, she participated in a national search which concluded in hiring Giuseppe Getto, a new Ph.D. from Michigan State University. Boynton is working on another collection of poems and a memoir as well as continuing to revise her theoretical essay on autobiography. After serving on the Personnel Committee for ten years, she now is happily organizing the Raquette Lake Writers Retreat and the Department Newsletter. She has moved into a newly renovated home, featuring her grandmother’s writing desk—a huge Victorian secretary.

**David Franke**
My edited collection, *Composing and Revising the Professional and Technical Writing Program* was released by Parlor Press with more info at http://www.parlorpress.com/designiscourse (NB: makes an excellent birthday gift for friends and family). I worked with Alex Reid and Anthony Lorenzo on this book, and we think it came out well. It’s been nominated for the best collection of technical essays this year. This has been a good teaching year: some of our courses went GE, so the population and feel of the course is entirely different. I particularly enjoy The Evolution of Writing, which is a historical overview of the ways that new technologies for communication enhance/deepen/change the way cultural identities are formed. I also teach during the summer for the Seven Valleys National Writing Project (cortland.edu/7VWP), an intense, 8-4 class every weekday in July. It’s a crucible for the K-12 teachers who attend—a place for a critical mass of teachers to engage in writing, reading, conversation and teaching with other teachers. We joke about how geeky this group is and indeed they are (who else would give up July to talk about writing and learning?) This year will be our fourth Summer Institute, I believe. With some of the Seven Valleys graduates (called “Teacher Consultants”), I went to Orlando where we participated in the National Writing Project conference (and NCTE). It was strange there. Disney looks the way candy

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**Faculty Mosaic cont.**

**smells. Back here in CNY, I’ve been holding free Seven Valleys mini-conferences for regional teachers (Dryden, Tully, Groton, Lansing, Dewitt, the Liberty Partnership, OCM BOCES and the like), going to lots of French horn recitals (Joe), plays (Drew), basketball games (Eli) and Cub Scout meetings (Jackson). Vicki and I I went to the Modern Language Association conference to Los Angeles over Winter Break to interview for our New Media position where we talked with fifteen amazing people, specialists in Professional Writing with an emphasis on technology. In July my fiancé and I took a major step forward and our five year plan — in which she sells her house, I sell mine and we buy a house together — fell into place when we found a 101 year old house in Tully. We plan to marry in August, put in a garden and raise chickens (not all on the same day).

**Marni Gauthier,**
Associate Professor, returns this year from her sabbatical, during which she completed her book, *Amnesia and Redress in Contemporary American Fiction: Counterhistory.* Forthcoming from Palgrave Macmillan this November as part of their *American Literature Readings in the 21st Century* series, it identifies a new form of the historical novel as a distinct phenomenon of recent global and national history. She also designed two new courses, a graduate seminar which she is currently teaching, “The Post-modern Sacred”; and “Introduction to Film Analysis,” a General Education course which the Department hopes to offer in Fall 2011. Lastly, she began a creative project of long-standing germination, a memoir of her mother’s life; and completed her first Olympic distance triathlon — in which she placed 9th in her age group of 95 women and 55th of 1414 women overall.

**Andrea Harbin**
The past year has been an eventful one for me. In the summer, I was able to return to my western roots, bringing my family out to Northern California to visit my family and explore Bodega Bay. We then enjoyed a three-day drive to Western Montana to see more family on Flathead Lake (followed by three-day drive back). In the Fall, I attended two conferences, presenting one paper on *Shrek* as a modern Robin Hood at the Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Conference in Alexandria Virginia, and one paper at the South Eastern Medieval Association Conference in Roanoke Virginia on how political and economic power effected the assignment of plays to various guilds in 14th century York. I also temporarily assumed the mantle of Graduate Coordinator (and have now happily passed it on to Kim Stone) and managed to complete and submit an article on women, guilds, and medieval York. My students continue to be fabulous (thank you), and I had particular fun with my graduate Middle English class because we ended the term with some medieval food and a workshop on medieval book-making (not to be confused with gambling). For wonderful online resources on Medieval Studies, see my website www.netserf.org (a shameless plug).

**Mary Lynch Kennedy**
has a new edition of a book, *Writing in the Disciplines,* co-authored with William J. Kennedy in the Comparative Literature Department at Cornell. The seventh edition of the text will be published by Prentice Hall this year. Mary received a 2010 Educator of Excellence Award from the New York State English Council. She was also honored with this award in 1996. Mary Kennedy’s *Theorizing Composition: A Critical Sourcebook of Theory and Scholarship in Contemporary Composition Studies* (Greenwood P 1998) has been published in digital form as an e-book.

**Karen Stearns**
Assistant Professor, has taken on some new responsibilities in the last calendar year. Recently named editor of the NYS English Council publication, *The English Record,* Karen serves on the state organization’s board as a regional director. In addition, she has assumed the responsibility of Coordinator for Field Placement in our English Education program. She has several publications in the pipeline and has been invited by the associate editor to contribute to a new Routledge project, an *Annotated Bibliography of English Studies.* Karen’s passion for teaching has not diminished in the almost four and a half decades she has been in public education. She says “it’s a privilege to teach at SUNY and to mentor the next generation of English teachers.” She is very satisfied to see so many of her students make the transition to colleagues as they move into their own teaching positions. Recently several of her former graduate students have nominated her for NYSN’s 2011 Educator of Excellence award.

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**Faculty Mosaic cont.**

**Joel Shatzky**

Professor emeritus, will be completing his fifth year at Kingsborough CC as an adjunct where he will be teaching a writing and a fiction course. He edited a collection of his students' short stories--"Eyes on Lights Open"-- which was printed and distributed to them at the end of Fall, 2010 semester. His interview with Diane Ravitch, and a review of her book, "The Death and Life of the Great American School System," was published in *Jewish Currents* in the Autumn 2010 issue. Excerpts from a monograph he wrote on the economic condition of the United States, "Is Our Economic System Sustainable?" appears in the Winter/Spring 2011 issue of *Social Science Docket*, a Joint Publication of the New York and New Jersey Councils for the Social Studies. A forthcoming article which he edited, an interview with a Holocaust survivor who was instrumental in the conducting of the women's camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, is scheduled for publication in the Spring issue of *Jewish Currents*. His novel "Sophia: An Epic of Art, Love, War, and Revolution" will be self-published early next month.

He is a regular blogger for *Huffington Post*--"Educating for Democracy,"--and a song he wrote--both music and lyrics--"If" was recently performed at the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture of which he is a member.

In the Spring he is hopeful that his play, "Atonement," will be produced and another work, a one-woman show, "Completely Clara," is being "workshopped" for possible performance at the Cornelia Street Cafe in Greenwich Village. He is also planning to provide musical entertainment on the piano for a local nursing home whose funds for entertainment were eliminated--along with those of most other nursing homes--to "balance the City budget."

**Alumni News**

**Adam Berenstain** (PWR 2009)

Since graduating from Cortland's Professional Writing program, I've been writing reviews, how-to's, and feature articles for the magazines *Mac|Life* and *Macworld*. I'm busy nearly every week with one or more assignments thanks to the encouragement of my PWR professors and the skills I learned to develop in their classes. I've also recently finished the first draft of my first novel, a thriller set in Upstate New York, which began life as a short story in a PWR fiction class.

**Kevin Bahler** (PWR 2009)

Blogger Bahler says, "Never forget that every single business needs you. Copywriting, copyediting, proofreading and the ability to translate professional jargon into common language will always be needed. When I entered PWR, the sentiment was very strong: "Whatever you do, you will have to write." That was the very idea of the program. It still very much is true. . . . There is no shortage of office buildings or bad writers. You have a heck of a useful talent. Make use of it."

**Meaghan Connaire** (COM 2007 PWR minor)

I'm currently working at Scholastic as the Corporate Communications Coordinator. I am the assistant to the VP of Corporate Communications, Kyle Good, who handles all press on the Harry Potter series (so exciting!). I started in November after working in the commercial insurance world for three years after Cortland. I was a Professional Writing minor. I live in NYC. I'm catching up on a ton of YA literature thanks to this job and am looking to start moving on my own YA project. I might as well try to take advantage of the fact that I work for this company!

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Dave Emke (PWR 2005, M.A.T. 2007)
He has worked at “The Post-Journal” in Jamestown, N.Y., since January 2008. His current position as features and entertainment reporter has him covering a varied beat that includes the local music and theater scenes. In addition he reports on social and agricultural life in Chautauqua County. He and his wife, Carrie, were married in October 2008 and reside in Sinclairville, New York.

Timothy E Hopkins (PWR 2008)
I have been doing technical writing and editing for the Federal Aviation Administration for the last 2 years. I dish out high-fives and foot-fives with the best of ’em.

Nicole Hushla
I just finished running a fund-raising team on a Congressional race in Pennsylvania. We lost; it has been a terrible year for Democrats. I am planning to move to DC and continue working in finance, but my goal is to do development for a non-profit organization. I’ll probably continue working in politics for a bit. I got to meet Joe Biden and Bill Clinton in one week; that kind of elbow brushing won’t get old for a while.

Smily Lata (PWR 2007)
I am going to Burkina Faso, Africa this summer for 4-5 weeks. Some of the things I will be doing involve teaching leadership classes for pastors, their wives, and other lay leaders. I will be leaving around July 14.

Nick Pietropaolo (MA ENG 2007)
has been accepted at the University of Michigan Law School. He will begin the program in June.

Nicole Sgueglia (ENG 2006)
I just got a new job at Cengage Learning in Clifton Park (near Albany). I’ll be an Associate Acquisitions Editor - in charge of some of my own subjects. I’m really excited about it - I start next week!

Don Unger (PWR 2005)
I worked as a copyeditor and an assistant to the Production Editor at “The American Journal of Botany” for a year after graduating from Cortland. Last May I completed my MA in English from the University of Alaska Anchorage. I began a PhD program at Purdue University in Rhetoric and Composition.

Special Thanks to:
Editor: Victoria Boynton
Assistant Editor/Layout: Allison Best

And all the Alumni, Faculty, and current students who contributed to this year’s newsletter. Special thanks to Boynton’s Revising and Editing class.

If you’d like to donate to the English Department please contact: Molly McGowan, English Department secretary

Matt Ianno and Adam Ramos on stage, performing spoken word poetry at Cortland Writer’s Association and Phi Iota Alpha’s “Poetry Slam For Japan” on May 4th.