Contents

PAGE 1  Chair’s Column

PAGE 2  Honoring Our Retiring Faculty

PAGE 3  Mortar Board Outstanding Seniors

PAGE 4  Scholarships

PAGE 5  Congratulations Class of 2020!

PAGE 6  Faculty Promotions

PAGE 7  Irish Studies

PAGE 9  Literature

PAGE 11  English Teaching

PAGE 13  Creative Writing

PAGE 15  Graduate Students
Every year at the end of the Spring semester, we send out this newsletter to celebrate the accomplishments of the students and faculty of the English Department at the University of Montana.

In our department this year, over 60 students graduated with a BA in English, and over 20 students graduated with an MA in English or an MFA in Creative Writing. In their time in the English Department, these students concentrated on different areas of study: Literature, Creative Writing, English Teaching, and Film. But reading and writing, art and education, have inspired them all. Many of them have given presentations at conferences, published poems or stories or essays, or produced documentary films. Many have won scholarships and awards. Their teachers congratulate them all. It's a joy to work with our students.

Our faculty, too, have had a productive year as teachers, scholars, creative writers, and members of the larger university community. Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read about their scholarly and creative accomplishments.

Two of our professors of Creative Writing, Deirdre McNamer and Kevin Canty, are retiring after nearly twenty-five years of teaching in our department. Impressive writers and teachers, they have played a major role in giving our Creative Writing program the shape and national reputation it has. Another professor of Creative Writing, the poet Joanna Klink, is leaving the department to take a job at the Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas in Austin. All of us who have been colleagues of these writers will miss them. We wish them well in the years ahead.

This has of course been an unusual academic year. Here at the university, as everywhere in the world, it seems as though time had been broken in two: the days before the pandemic and the days in the midst of the pandemic. The public health crisis deeply changed life at the university this spring. In the middle of March, all classes were moved online. Dormitories were closed, and students and faculty and staff were asked to work from home. Everyone was disoriented. I'm grateful to all the teachers and students and staff who, with no preparation for this crisis, worked together to make sure that students could nevertheless have a valuable educational experience this last semester.

We intend to return to in-person classes this fall. The President and the Provost of the university, in consultation with a large task force, have been working hard to prepare for the coming year. The well-being of everyone on campus—students, faculty, and staff—will be their primary concern as they chart a path forward in the changed circumstances we have to cope with now.

We always love hearing from former students. Please write to share with us your accomplishments, your work experiences, your publications, your creative activities of any sort. Please write to share with us, too, your thoughts about English, the study of literature, the value of the humanities, or the challenges facing public education in our time.

May you all be well—may you take good care of yourselves, your loved ones, and your neighbors— in this bewildering crisis we are living through.
Honoring Our Retiring Faculty

When Professors Deirdre McNamer and Kevin Canty began their careers at UM, the Creative Writing Program stood at the cusp of a new era with the retirement of long-time fiction writers, Earl Ganz and William Kittredge. This spring our program repeats that changing of the guard as both Dee and Kevin step out of the classroom a final time.

Dee McNamer taught writing at several universities before joining our prose team in 1998. Having studied, taught, and practiced both journalism and creative writing, Dee reinforced a broad approach to good writing instituted by Kittredge, one that appreciates all good stories, whether they’re factual or just true. Both graduate and undergraduate students remember her as kind and fair but exacting, a professor unwilling to allow even her best writers to settle for ‘good enough.’ Dee published four novels to critical acclaim, and her essays, short fiction, reviews and reporting have appeared in many top-tier magazines and journals. Her national reputation is evidenced by her selection as chair of the fiction panel of the National Book Awards in 2011 and as a judge for the 2015 PEN/Faulkner award.

Kevin Canty joined the fiction branch of our Creative Writing Program in 1996, with one collection of short stories and one novel under his belt and another novel in the works. Since then, he has published two more story collections and four more novels, and has appeared frequently in magazines like The New Yorker, Esquire and GQ. Kevin led fiction courses at all levels, mastering an ability to “ask the right questions of his students — the kind of questions that unlock key aspects of a story, jar them loose and help them come into focus.” He’s known for his “just do it” advice, his way of challenging serious writers to read widely and write daily. In addition to his teaching, Kevin served one term as Director of Creative Writing.

Though our colleagues will be replaced, there are some vacancies that just can’t be filled. We will miss them. Nevertheless, the Creative Writing Program’s future will be built upon the strong foundation that Dee and Kevin helped establish.
DARIAN KEELS - LITERATURE

Darian Keels is an outstanding English major, which means, first and foremost, that she loves to read and loves to write. Her essays on a range of challenging topics are thoughtful quests for understanding. Darian won an English department scholarship for her work in a first-year literature course—an impressive accomplishment—and her strengths as a literary scholar have grown each year since then. We expect wonderful things from her as she goes forward to make her mark in the world of letters.

LUKE SMITH - CREATIVE WRITING

Luke Smith entered the University of Montana as a gifted and motivated student, but his growth during his time here has been truly impressive. He has excelled in every forum and capacity: as a student in workshops, as an editor for the undergraduate literary magazine, The Oval, and as an intern for the graduate literary magazine, utbank. His teachers consistently praise his commitment, acumen, and performance, and they are grateful for the chance to have worked with such an outstanding student.

BRENDAN TOBALSKE - FILM STUDIES

Brendan Tobalske is brilliant—his essays in film theory are philosophically deep, expertly written, and his insights into film are dazzling. These unmistakable intellectual gifts are perhaps matched by his profound artistic sensibilities—and all of these talents translate beautifully in his filmmaking. And happily, he is a wonderfully humble, deeply conscientious human being. After graduation Brendan plans to pursue a PhD in Film Studies or Philosophy. He will no doubt do great work!

MADISON WICKENS - ENGLISH TEACHING

Madison Wickens, a student teacher in English at Frenchtown High School, loves helping her students grow in their abilities to read critically and write effectively. She enjoys teaching literary texts that broaden students’ perspectives on culture and the world. After graduation, she wants to teach English language arts at a rural school in Montana. She is a wonderful role model for middle and high school students and an enthusiastic member of the teaching profession.
Scholarships

Special thanks to all of the donors and contributions that make scholarship and award funds for higher learning in the humanities possible.

Undergraduate Scholarship Winners

Kayetlin Alexander
   James Crumley Memorial Award

Donna Arganbright
   Margaret Beebe Memorial Scholarship

Arwen Baxter
   Rose Southworth-Megee Scholarship

Noah Belanger
   Richard Drake Writing Award
   & Helen J. Olson Scholarship

Sierra Cornelius
   Maureen Mansfield Scholarship

Lindsey Gallagher
   Helen J. Olson Scholarship

Rebekah Jenkins
   Opus Scholarship

Emma McMullen
   Welch Scholarship

Abigail Nordstrom
   Rose Southworth-Megee Scholarship

Melissa Paulson
   Opus Scholarship

Graduate Scholarship Winners

Alyx Chandler
   Greta Wrolstad Travel Award
   & Goedicke-Robinson Scholarship

Danielle Cooney
   Greta Wrolstad Travel Award

Samuel Dunnington
   Husted-Jones Scholarship

William Fesperman
   Greta Wrolstad Travel Award

Nicole Gomez
   Nettie Weber Creative Writing Award

Rebecca Jacobson
   Bertha Morton Award

Jesse Nee-Vogelman
   Merriam Frontier Award

Abigail Seethoff
   Husted-Jones Scholarship

David Stalling
   Bertha Morton Award
   & A.B. Guthrie Memorial Award
Congratulations Class of 2020!

BA Graduates

Jaya Banks - Creative Writing  
Trisha Bartle - Creative Writing  
Patricia Chaffin - Creative Writing *  
Shane Coburn - Creative Writing *  
Bailey Collins - Creative Writing  
Michael Demmendaal - Creative Writing *  
Siobhan Donnelly - Creative Writing  
Jadyn Emerson - Creative Writing  
Kasey Faur - Creative Writing  
Marielle Gallagher - Creative Writing  
Maura Ganz - Creative Writing  
Abigail Gillespie - Creative Writing  
Grace Held - Creative Writing  
Mielle Hubbard - Creative Writing  
Shandra Jones - Creative Writing  
Adam Kaftan - Creative Writing  
Dillon Knuffke - Creative Writing  
Andrea Kunz - Creative Writing  
Caitlin McDonald - Creative Writing *  
Shelby Metz - Creative Writing  
Jackson Parker - Creative Writing  
Kevin Peel - Creative Writing  
Michelle Schenk - Creative Writing  
Emily Simonson - Creative Writing  
Luke Smith - Creative Writing  
Nicholas Soderburg - Creative Writing

MFA & MA Graduates

Danielle Cooney - MFA Poetry  
William Fesperman - MFA Poetry  
Emma Neslund - MFA Poetry *  
Melissa Phelan - MFA Poetry *  
Emma Spencer - MFA Poetry  
Callie Atkinson - MFA Fiction *  
Beatrice Garrard - MFA Fiction  
Barry Maxwell - MFA Fiction  
Benjamin Yeager - MFA Fiction  
Regina Fitzsimmons - MFA Nonfiction  
Emma Pfeiffer - MFA Nonfiction  
Kelly Schirmann - MFA Nonfiction  
Rebecca Swanberg - MFA Nonfiction

Lillian Soper - Creative Writing *  
Colter Trent - Creative Writing  
Matthew Vance - Creative Writing *  
Wesley Knox - Film Studies *  
Matthew Soriano - Film Studies  
Brendan Tobalske - Film Studies *  
Henry Westesen - Film Studies *  
Tessa Marsden - English Teaching *  
Katherine McMurrin - English Teaching *  
Emily Morrison - English Teaching & Creative Writing *  
Jake Morton - English Teaching  
Cristina Quinn - English Teaching  
Hannah Riley - English Teaching  
Alexandra Schilling - English Teaching *  
Madison Wickens - English Teaching  
Soela Vanleishout - English Linguistics  
Nicole Brockman - Literature  
Corbin Buff - Literature  
Racquel Fontanilla - Literature  
Darian Keels - Literature  
Serena Palmer - Literature  
Mia Tompkins - Literature *  
Norbert Weber - Literature  
April Wilbur - Literature  
Elizabeth Wipperman - Literature

Shannon Comes At Night - MA English Teaching *  
Mikaela Martin - MA English Teaching  
Amanda McGinnis - MA English Teaching  
Elizabeth Paich - MA English Teaching *  
Larissa Fitzpatrick - MA Literature  
Thomas Herring - MA Literature  
Henry Kramer - MA Literature  
Rachel Smith - MA Literature *  
Anna Wilson - MA Literature  
Jonathan Pierce - MA Literature & MFA Poetry  
Miles Jochem - MA Literature & MFA Poetry

* Graduated Fall 2019

Spring 2020 / p. 5
Faculty Promotions

ERIN COSTELLO WECKER
PROMOTED TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Director of Composition and Affiliated Faculty in Irish Studies

Dr. Wecker published three peer-reviewed journal articles, which appear in WPA: Writing Program Administration; Teaching English in the Two-Year College; and Studi irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies. She once again served as the Associate Editor for The Best of the Rhetoric and Composition Journals (Parlor Press). She is currently working on a book project that focuses on Kate Kennedy. Professor Wecker’s research on Kennedy has benefitted from collaboration with the office of Robert O’Driscoll, Consul General of Ireland—San Francisco. Dr. Wecker was selected to be a keynote speaker at an “Interdisciplinary Roundtable” at the American Conference for Irish Studies-West in Portland, OR. She was invited to present her research at five conferences including: Rhetoric Society of America Biennial Conference, American Conference for Irish Studies/An Chomhdháil Mheiriceánach do Léann na hÉireann, Conference on College Composition and Communication, Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference, and American Conference for Irish Studies-West. She also served as a co-chair for the Feminist Caucus workshop at the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

QUAN MANH HA PROMOTED TO FULL PROFESSOR
Director of Literature

In the 2019-2020 academic year, Dr. Ha has produced five publications. His book Other Moons: Vietnamese Stories of the American War and Its Aftermath is published with Columbia University Press. He collaborated with his former undergraduate student Sierra Gideon on publishing an article titled “Purple Hats and Threatened Whiteness in Flannery O’Connor’s ‘Everything That Rises Must Converge’” in Short Fiction in Theory & Practice. Professor Ha also edited and wrote an introduction to a short Vietnamese American memoir, and it is published in War, Literature & the Arts. His translation of two Vietnamese short stories into English have been accepted for publication in Asian Literature and Translation.
Irish Studies

Léann na hÉireann has had a very productive year—here are some highlights:

**RESEARCH**

**Documentary Film:**

Irish Studies just completed a documentary film on the life of Thomas Francis Meagher with a release scheduled for fall 2020.

**Travelling Exhibit:**

Dr. Erin Costello Wecker and Dr. Traolach Ó Riordáin welcomed Margaret Walsh, a graduate of the Notre Dame Irish Studies, to UM. Margaret continued her study of Irish culture, with the assistance of Drs. Wecker and Ó Riordáin, and completed a research project on the life of Marcus Daly at the Butte Silver Bow Archives. This exhibit will travel the state in the fall.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Irish Studies have been actively involved in visiting high schools across Montana. This outreach is made possible through support of a grant from the Irish Government Emigrant Support Program, the Friends of Irish Studies, and Sam and Julie Baldridge.

**Music Camp:**

The Irish Studies program worked with over 60 local musicians to organize the Mission Mountain Traditional Irish Music Camp, the first of its kind in western Montana.

**INSTRUCTION AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

**Irish Language:**

Online High School Courses: Irish Studies continued its relationship with the Montana Digital Academy, teaching 40 high school students.

Online Accredited University Courses: Dr. Ó Riordáin established UM as the first university in the United States to make accredited Irish language courses available online.
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Fulbright Irish Language Teaching Assistants:

Irish Studies partnered with the Fulbright Commission to host two Irish language teaching assistants, Cecily Lynch and Ellen Corbett for the academic year.

Irish Language and Law Interns:

Irish Studies offered internships to two exchange students from the Language and Law program at University College, Cork. These internships are offered in partnership with the Federal Court and the Law School.

Visiting Dignitaries:

Irish Studies partnered with the Office of the Governor of Montana, the Montana World Trade Center, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and the Butte Silver Bow Archives to welcome representatives of the Irish Government to Montana in September. The purpose of the visit was to commemorate the centenary of the 1919 visit of Irish nationalist leader and President of the Irish Republic, Eamon de Valera, to Montana, and to introduce the new Consul General of Ireland for the West, Robert O’Driscoll, to the community. The visit included a meeting with the President of UM, Seth Bodnar, and the Provost, Jon Harbor. Drs. Wecker and Ó Riordáin accompanied the visitors throughout their time here and informed them of the great work of faculty and community at the University of Montana.
Ruth Vanita

Dr. Vanita joined the English Department faculty from the Global Humanities and Religions Program this year. Her book, Memory of Light, is forthcoming from Penguin. She also published an essay titled "Home" in the Hindustani Times, in which she reflects on lockdown during the global pandemic.

Bob Baker

Three essays by Bob Baker have just appeared or are forthcoming: "What Do the Inconsolable See? From Virgil’s Orpheus to Marilyayne Robinson’s Ruth" (Religion and the Arts), "Forrest Gander’s Phenomenology of Encounter" (Paideuma), and "Is There a Place for Spirit in Jane Bennett’s Vital Materialism?" (Cultural Critique).

Nancy Cook

Professor Nancy Cook has published two essays: "Lightning Strikes, Burned Bread, and Chipmunks: Women Lookouts in the American West." in Representing Rural Women, Margaret Thomas-Evans and Whitney Womack Smith, eds., Lanham, MD and London: Lexington Books, 2019 (145-157), and "Quotidian Wests: Exploring Regionality through the Everyday." forthcoming in Teaching Western American Literature, Brady Harrison and Randi Lynn Tanglen, eds., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, June 2020. No collusion here, but Nancy is pleased to have had her colleague, Brady Harrison, edit her work for three collections.

Bruce Hardy

Dr. Hardy was given the Teacher of the Year Award by the Davidson Honors College.

Brady Harrison

Dr. Harrison has a new book forthcoming in June, titled Teaching Western American Literature. His co-editor, Randi Tanglen, is a former MA student in our Literature program, current professor at Austin College in Texas, and soon-to-be Executive Director of Humanities Montana. Dr. Harrison also published an article titled “This Dizzy Affair: Quantum Measurement, Schroedinger’s Cat, and Hammett’s Falcon” in Novel: A Forum on Fiction, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 261-83. He published three pieces of fiction and has once forthcoming: “The Pintlers,” “It’s Not Like You Think,” Buffalo Jump Brother,” and The Italian Gardens.”
ALUMNA
ACHIEVEMENT

Tarren Andrews

MA Literature alumna 2015, Tarren Andrews, won the Bella da Costa Green Award for her project, “Indigeneity Outside Indigenous Studies: Encounters with Indigenous Futures and Medieval Pasts.” Tarren is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Colorado, Boulder. The Medieval Academy of America established the award to support the work of medieval scholars of color. Tarren used the award to organize a round-table discussion titled, “Indigeneity Outside Indigenous Studies: Encounters between Medieval Pasts and Indigenous Futures.”

CONFERENCE

Montana Medieval Roundup

This August saw the second iteration of the “Montana Medieval Roundup.” Organized by Dr. Ashby Kinch, the conference brings medievalists with Montana and UM roots together to share polished scholarship and ongoing research. This year’s gathering included presentations by UM alumnae and scholars of the West, including Tarren Andrews (MA 2015, PhD candidate at UC Boulder), Dr. Bridget Whearty (BA 2003, currently Assistant Professor at SUNY-Binghamton), Sarah Harlan-Haughey (BA 2005, currently Associate Professor at the University of Maine), Briana Wipf (MA 2017, PhD candidate at the University of Pittsburgh), and Rachel Smith (MA 2019).
Leanne Deschamps

Because bridges to adult life must be built early, adjunct Leanne Deschamps has spent this past year working with Valley Oak Educational Resource Center to build those bridges for students. She encourages her high school students to take on-campus and online college courses, visit college campuses, involve themselves in community activities, and apply for internships and scholarships for educational and career goals beyond high school. Additionally, Leanne regularly invites the Writing Coaches of Montana into her secondary English classroom to support students’ development of writing skills. Leanne continues to mentor English teaching candidates and those who have graduated and begun their secondary English teaching careers.

English Teaching

Dana Haring

In 2019-2020, adjunct Dana Haring has continued to expand her literacy efforts. She presented sessions focused on reading, writing, and collaboration at the MFPE Educators’ Conference in Belgrade in October with an audience of practicing and aspiring teachers. She is part of a team of Montana educators who are planning the October 2020 conference. Also ongoing is an action research project she and her teaching partner are conducting at Kalispell Middle School that compares note taking in digital and analog formats. A commitment to lifelong learning fuels her efforts.
Visiting Chinese Scholars:

The English Teaching Program hosted five visiting scholars from Universities across China. Each observed UM courses in English Teaching, Literature, Linguistics, Composition, and Education under the mentorship of Beverly Chin.

Ms. Wang Fangfang - Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
Mr. Yang Youwen - University of Jinan
Ms. Hou Li - Liaocheng University
Ms. Zhou Shumei - Liaocheng University
Ms. Liu Lin - University of Jinan

Beverly Chin

Beverly Ann Chin was the keynote speaker at the English Language Teachers Conference in Belgrade, Serbia, in May 2019. Chin presented workshops for the International Scholarly Exchange Curriculum and the Study of U.S. Institute on Secondary Education. As a result of Peking University’s recent translation of her How to Write a Great Research Paper, the Chinese National Education Commission and the Chinese Educational Television Network invited her to be their inaugural conference keynote speaker in Beijing, China, in September 2019. Chin presented at the national conferences of College Board—Advanced Placement, National Council of Teachers of English, and International Literacy Association. She presented at the state conferences of Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts, Writing Projects under the Big Sky, Montana Catholic Teachers Conference, and Montana Book Festival. Chin wrote the foreword to Donna Miller’s Honoring Identities: Creating Culturally Responsive Learning Communities.

Spring 2020 / p. 12
Robert Stubblefield's essay, "More than Five Minutes" which appeared in the Winter/Spring 2020 issue of Whitefish Review, was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

The Oval

The 2020 edition of The Oval hosted a virtual launch in cooperation with the Student Involvement Network and The Mansfield Library on Monday, May 4. The Oval editorial staff, with the mentorship of Robert Stubblefield, has worked hard through a challenging semester to publish the literature and art of their peers and will host a reading and launch of the print edition this summer or fall.

Deirdre McNamer

Deirdre McNamer’s fifth novel, Aviary, is forthcoming from Milkweed Editions early in 2021. She also had a story published in the literary journal A Public Space.
NEW CREATIVE WRITING FACULTY

Boris Fishman
Boris will join the Creative Writing Faculty in the Fall 2020 semester as an Assistant Professor of Fiction.

Erin Saldin
Erin Saldin joined the Creative Writing Faculty as Assistant Professor in the fall of 2019 after many years serving as an adjunct instructor. She was awarded the Humanities Institute Faculty Research Grant for 2020-2021. She was also selected as the keynote speaker for the Missoula Youth Book Festival in October 2019 and presented craft talk at two high schools and at an event at the Missoula Public Library in that capacity.

VISITING WRITERS
This year the Creative Writing program welcomed several visiting writers to campus from 2019-2020.

Poetry
Malena Morling and Ed Skoog joined the Poetry faculty.

Nonfiction
Christopher Dombrowski joined the Nonfiction faculty.

Fiction
Justin Taylor and Marie-Helene Bertino joined the Fiction faculty.

Marie-Helene Bertino
Visiting Kittredge Writer, Marie-Helene Bertino has a new novel, Parakeet, which she will launch in June.
Abby Seethoff

Abby Seethoff (MFA Nonfiction 2021) gave a community talk sponsored by Athleta and led a professional development session for the Missoula YWCA staff. Both were about anti-diet justice, entitled “If We Stopped Trying to Burn Calories, Could We Burn Down The Patriarchy Instead?”

Kelly Schirmann

Kelly Schirmann (MFA Nonfiction 2020) is excited to announce that The New World, her second book of poetry and essays, will be published by Black Ocean in the Fall of 2020. She'll be staying on to teach creative writing and composition courses this summer at UM, while working on a longer nonfiction collection.

Graduate Students

Barry Maxwell

Barry Maxwell (MFA Fiction 2020) was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in the Memoir category for his piece “The Big Chair.”

Beatrice Garrard

Beatrice Garrard (MFA Fiction 2020) won a Summer Fishtrap Fellowship for July. She was also a finalist for the Pacific Northwest Writers' Association Literary Contest for her novel excerpt.

CutBank

The CutBank team braved air travel to attend AWP and represent UM in San Antonio early this Spring before pandemic lockdowns. While there, the team promoted the magaize, hosted a reading, and hosted a party for CutBank’s chapbook contest winners.

The CutBank editorial staff poses while tabling at AWP.
Contributions from English alumni and friends fund a variety of Department initiatives, programs, and student scholarships. If you would like to support the College of Humanities and Sciences, English Department, please send check or money order to University of Montana Foundation, P.O. Box 7159, Missoula, MT 59807-7159, with a note in the memo line designating it for the English Department. Contributions are also accepted online.

For more information about making a gift (with no obligation to do so), please contact the UM Foundation, (406) 243-2593.