



Northeastern University

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English Department Alumni e-Newsletter

Department of English

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October 01, 2008

# English Department Alumni e-Newsletter : Fall 2008

Northeastern University - Department of English

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## Recommended Citation

Northeastern University - Department of English, "English Department Alumni e-Newsletter : Fall 2008" (2008). *English Department Alumni e-Newsletter*. Paper 3. <http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d10018864>

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Fall 2008



Northeastern University

# English Department Alumni e-Newsletter

Northeastern University, English Department (617) 373-4540 [www.english.neu.edu](http://www.english.neu.edu)

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## A Letter From the Chair



*Greetings  
Friends,*

This fall has been a season of transition in the English Department (as

goes English at NU, so goes the nation...). Professor Tim Donovan, who served as our chair for the last two years, is taking a well-deserved and long-deferred sabbatical. We extend to him our thanks and gratitude for his unfailing kindness and steadiness at the helm. I am serving as Interim Chair until January. Stay tuned. Your next newsletter should have a new chair making a debut in this column. In the meantime, let me share some of our recent news.

We are particularly pleased to welcome two new colleagues to the department this year, Assistant Professor Nicole Aljoe and Assistant Professor Kimberly Juanita Brown. Read their profiles in this newsletter and you'll understand why we are so excited to have two such promising scholars and energetic and inventive teachers join us. Professor Carla Kaplan, our new Davis Distinguished Chair in American Studies, is now in residence, after two years holding prestigious fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, at the New York Public Library's Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers, and at Harvard University's DuBois Institute for African and African-American Research. In her short time here, she has already successfully initiated the establishment of a new Humanities Center at Northeastern and been appointed its first director. Professor Elizabeth Dillon, of the English Department, has been named one of the Associate Directors, along with Professor Amílcar Barreto, of Political Science. Not only is the department enjoying growing visibility in a variety of interdisciplinary

initiatives, but the appointment of Professor Mary Loeffelholz as Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, after a year as Special Advisor to President Aoun, has showcased the department as a source of both scholarly and administrative talent.

Our students continue to delight and impress us. The undergraduate major is going strong with some 300 students, several of whom are double or dual majors (including a few pre-med English majors!). Their academic interests and co-op experiences are as diverse as ever, and this newsletter shares just a few of the impressive accomplishments of our most recent graduates. We are always eager for news from those of you out there who haven't yet shared. Please write us and tell us what you are up to!

I am extremely pleased to report that our doctoral students performed very well on last year's job market. Two early modern drama students advised by Professor Kathy Howlett, Nichole DeWall and Cory Grewell (profiled in these pages), accepted tenure-track positions at McKendree University in Lebanon, Illinois and Thiel College in Greenville, Pennsylvania, respectively. We are also proud to announce that several of our graduate alumni have published books in the last two years, as you will see in our "Graduate Program Alumni Bookshelf." We'd love to hear from all of you about your recent work and achievements.

I wish you all a successful and fulfilling year, wherever you are!

*Marina Leslie*

## English Department Welcomes Two New Assistant Professors



**NICOLE ALJOE**, PhD Tufts University, comes to us from the English Department at University of Utah, where she taught for three years. Professor Aljoe's work tracks the circulation of

slave narratives in pre-twentieth-century Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe. She has just finished her book manuscript, *"So Much Things to Say": The Creole Testimony of West Indian Slaves*, a study of the socio-historical contexts, generic forms, and rhetorical strategies of slave narratives from the British Caribbean colonies. Unlike the canonical US narratives by Frederick Douglass or Harriet Jacobs, the slave narratives from the Caribbean are all dictated rather than self-authored texts and, as such, offer particular challenges when addressing questions of voice or narrative form. Professor Aljoe uses theories of creolisation and *testimonio* to address these mediated and sometimes fragmentary documents on their own terms as "creole testimony." She is also presently working on an anthology of slave narratives from the Caribbean.

This semester, Professor Aljoe is teaching an 18th-century literature course on the "rise" of the British novel. Next semester she will be teaching a Junior/Senior Seminar, "Burn!: Narrating Slavery in the Caribbean and Latin America," on historical and contemporary revisions of the slave narrative produced in the Caribbean. She will also teach the early American Literature survey course, which will take an hemispheric perspective on American literature.

Professor Aljoe reports she is "absolutely thrilled to be back in the Boston." "I'm also excited to be working with the cosmopolitan, yet conscientious students of Northeastern."



**KIMBERLY JUANITA BROWN**, PhD in African-American Studies and American Studies, Yale University, comes to us after two years as a Postdoctoral Fellow

at Rice University and a summer pursuing her research in Brazil. Her work focuses on twentieth-century African American and African diaspora literature and visual culture. Her current book project, *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Resonance in the Contemporary*, explores how the legacy of slavery is played out in representations of black women's bodies in the world of the black Atlantic. She is co-editor of *Black Bodies in Pain: Race, Sentience, and Visual Culture*, currently under review, and has published an essay on Sally Hemings and Chica da Silva in *Women's Studies Quarterly*.

Professor Brown's abiding interest in visual culture and the arts is demonstrated not only in her interdisciplinary scholarship but also in her cross-disciplinary work as a curator and artist. In 2005, she was curator and participant in "Threading Memory: A Quilting Exhibition and Fundraiser" for the women of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico at Artspace Gallery in New Haven, CT. The following year, she was curator and contributor to the Pan-Africanisms Art Exhibition, also in New Haven, at Yale University's African American Cultural Center Gallery.

This semester Professor Brown is teaching a Junior/Senior Seminar called: "Murder and Unbelonging in the Literary Imagination."

"Murder and Unbelonging" explores fictionalized narratives of historical murders, like Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Next semester, she is teaching "Black Women Writers," which focuses on four recurring themes (Body, Voice, Memory, and Movement) in black women's literature and culture.

Professor Brown reports that she is "increasingly impressed by the range and breadth of knowledge Northeastern students bring to her classes. They are a large part of the reason I chose to teach at the university and I have learned a great deal from my interactions with them." Aside from her artistic, research, and teaching interests, Brown describes herself as a walking encyclopedia of all things left-handed. "Ask me anything."

ML

### CREOLE TESTIMONY: Reading Narratives of Caribbean Slavery

A lecture by  
**NICOLE ALJOE**  
Assistant Professor of  
English,  
Northeastern University

November 19  
4:30-5:45 PM

Barrs Room/472 Holmes Hall

A presentation of the  
*English Department's*  
Barrs Lecture Series.

For more info, call  
(617) 373-3692.

### Former NU Professor Appointed Director of Dartmouth's IWR

Professor **CHRISTIANE "TIANE" DONAHUE**, who many of you remember as the Director of "Middler Year Writing" (now Advanced Writing in the Disciplines) at NU for many years, has accepted a position as Director of Dartmouth's Institute for Writing and Rhetoric (IWR). Professor Donahue comes to Dartmouth most recently from the University of Maine-Farmington, Maine's public liberal arts college, where she guided the development of a powerful first-year sequence of writing seminars, and fostering work on writing across the disciplines through faculty development, assessment, and research activities.

*Continued on page 5.*

## 2008 Peter Burton Hanson Writing Prizes



Prize recipient Elyse Merlo (above, center), with Professors Marina Leslie (left) and Beth Britt.

The fifth annual Peter Burton Hanson writing prizes were awarded on March 20, 2008. The awards are named in the honor and memory of Peter Burton Hanson, A&S '91, an English major, who perished along with his wife, Sue Kim and young daughter, Christine Lee, aboard United Airlines Flight 175, on 9/11/01. Prizes were awarded in the categories of Scholarly Writing and Creative Writing, areas in which Peter Hanson himself excelled. Faculty selected the winners from a number of excellent submissions.

**ELYSE MERLO** took the top prize in the category of Scholarly Writing for "Identification and Categorization in *People v. Kobe Bryant*." Elyse wrote the essay for Professor Beth Britt's Rhetoric of Law course in Fall 2007. **EMILY LEMISKA** received an honorable mention for "Frances Burney's *Evelina*," written for Professor Kathy Howlett's Junior/Senior Seminar in Women of Letters in the Long 18<sup>th</sup> Century, also in Fall 2007.

**JACEY FORTIN** took the top prize in the category of Creative Writing for her short story "Exile," written for Professor Frank Blessington's Fiction Workshop in Spring 2008. Honorable mention was awarded to **ABIGAIL ZORBAUGH** for "Warmer," written for Professor Sam Bernstein's Creative Writing course in Fall 2007.

At the March 20 reception, Elyse Merlo and Jacey Fortin read from their work. Faculty, students, and friends and family of Peter Burton Hanson attended the celebration. ~ BB

### News of 2008 Graduates

- ★ **Melanie Bishop** won the Cooperative Education Student Award, was a Leadership Scholar and was the editor of *Spectrum Magazine*.
- ★ **Joseph Eveld** will be entering the MFA program in Creative Writing at BU, with a scholarship.
- ★ **Jacey Fortin** won the Peter Burton Hanson prize in Creative Writing and held the third highest GPA of graduating English majors.
- ★ **Emi Gonzalez** will be entering the MA program in American Literature at Central Connecticut State University.
- ★ **Erika Keith** held the highest GPA among graduating English majors.
- ★ **Brittany Malitsky** will be taking a position as Program Assistant at Northeastern's Office of Alumni Relations.
- ★ **Stephen Mancuso** held the second highest GPA among graduating English majors.
- ★ **Elyse Merlo** won the Peter Burton Hanson prize in Scholarly Writing and will be entering the graduate program in Rhetoric at Penn State University with a full assistantship.
- ★ **Kristin Pasheluk** has been accepted to Teach for America and will teach English as a Second Language in New York for the next 2-3 years, while attending graduate school at one of the SUNY affiliates.
- ★ **Stephanie Peters** won the Cooperative Education Student Award.
- ★ **Brenda Robles** won the Husky Leadership Award and the *La Comunidad Latina En Accion* Scholarship Award and will be attending the American University Washington College of Law.
- ★ **Krista Sergi** was accepted to the M. Phil program Anglo-Irish Literatures at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland.
- ★ **Jessica White** won the Excellence in Staff Performance from ResLife. ~ BB



Jacey Fortin read her prize-winning short story "Exile" at the Hanson Writing Prize reception in March.

Associate Professor **Beth Britt** is the Head Advisor for undergraduate majors.  
She can be reached at [e.britt@neu.edu](mailto:e.britt@neu.edu).

## Grewell (Ph.D. '08) Accepts Position at Thiel College



Cory Grewell, Ph.D. 2008

**CORY GREWELL** (Ph.D. 2008) has begun a tenure-track job as an assistant professor at Thiel College in Greenville, PA, where he teaches courses ranging from Shakespeare to Western Humanities to Persuasive Writing. Cory finished his dissertation, "Subversive Merit: The Revision of the Classical Clever Slave as Witty Servant and Social Satirist in the Comedies of Ben Jonson," under the direction of Professor Kathy Howlett last spring.

Cory reports that he is thoroughly enjoying the job; in future semesters he will be teaching seminars in Milton as well as Mythology. Despite occasional pangs for Boston and the Northeastern community, Cory enjoys working with the faculty and students at Thiel.  
*Continued on page 6.*

## Pappas Invited to Speak at Homecoming Event

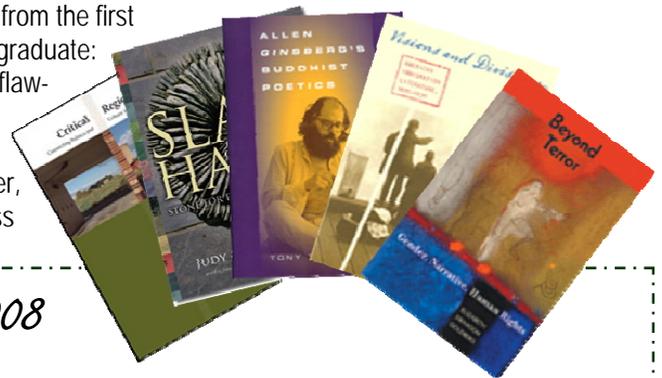
**STEPHANIE LOOMIS PAPPAS** (Ph.D. candidate) recently returned to her undergraduate college, Valparaiso University (in northwest Indiana), to speak about her experience pursuing a Ph.D. in English at Northeastern. Pappas was invited to join a number of other alumnae to discuss the topic, "Faith and Work, Love and Life" as part of a Homecoming Weekend event at Valparaiso.

Stephanie is in the fourth year of her graduate work at Northeastern and is beginning work on a dissertation in the field of Rhetoric and Composition studies. She is planning to write an ethnography in literacy studies for her doctoral project, focusing on how technology has influenced the way people read and write in the contemporary world. She hopes to begin the project by working with Google to determine how Google and the Internet in general have shaped contemporary literacy.

In her talk at Valparaiso she shared some of the history of her interest in writing with undergraduates at her *alma mater*. "I began by reading to them from the first paper I wrote as an undergraduate: the paper was technically flawless, but it said nothing," reports Stephanie. She received a "C" on the paper, and was forced to reassess

her method of writing. Over time, she learned to view writing "as a method for inquiry as opposed to a vehicle for correctness." In her work at Northeastern, that insight has blossomed into a teaching philosophy and the basis of her research into changing forms of literacy and writing.

Stephanie was drawn to Northeastern for graduate school because of the strength of the writing program and the opportunities for teaching advanced writing that graduate students enjoy. "I really like the philosophy of the writing program. What I like about the kind of writing we do is that we ask students to attach writing to their feelings but also to the larger world around them, such as their co-op work, the campus, or the city." This semester, Stephanie is managing the Writing Center as well as mentoring a "teaching network" that links writing teachers together to focus on sharing and refining teaching techniques and strategies. *EMD*



### Graduate Program Alumni Bookshelf, 2007-2008

[http://www.english.neu.edu/graduate\\_studies/alumni/books/](http://www.english.neu.edu/graduate_studies/alumni/books/)

Ted Buswick, MA 1975. *Slate of Hand: Stone for Fine Art & Folk Art*. Trafford Publishing, 2007.

Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, MA 1992. *Beyond Terror: Gender, Narrative, Human Rights*. Rutgers University Press, 2007.

Douglas Reichert Powell, PhD 1999. *Critical Regionalism*. University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Tim Prchal, MA 1990 and Tony Trigilio, PhD 1997. Eds. *Visions and Divisions: American Immigration Literature, 1870-1930*. Rutgers University Press, 2008.

Tony Trigilio. *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics*. Southern Illinois University Press, July 2007.

Associate Professor **Elizabeth Maddock Dillon** is the Graduate Coordinator.  
She can be reached at [e.dillon@neu.edu](mailto:e.dillon@neu.edu).

## Donahue Appointed Director of Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, Dartmouth College

Continued from page 2.



Tiane Donahue

Professor Donahue's goals for the Dartmouth's IWR include "supporting the excellent work in place at Dartmouth, exploring new ways to extend that work, supporting

the expansion of writing and rhetoric instruction across students' Dartmouth careers, and collaboratively implementing assessment of students' progress." Donahue will also be teaching a class about the ownership of creativity and originality.

Professor Donahue has been working in higher education across the cultures of France and the United States since the 1980s. She began her interest in writing and teaching writing as an undergraduate writing tutor at Northeastern University in 1981, pursued a BA degree in English and Education with plans to teach high school, and then was drawn to studying writing through the lens of linguistics and discourse analysis for an MA in Linguistics and Writing. Donahue began collaborating with French teachers and scholars during these years, beginning with a Whiting Foundation fellowship supporting a

research trip that became the grounds for her doctoral work in French functional linguistics and discourse analysis at l'Université de Paris V. While in France, she found herself drawn to the work of Frédéric François, who ended up being her thesis director.

During these years, as she taught writing, carried out program development, and directed programs working with colleagues in composition and across the disciplines, Donahue was inspired by composition theory and composition-rhetoric work and saw the possibility for highly fruitful interaction between this field and her other work. At the same time she traveled frequently back and forth between France and the United States. Donahue reports that one of the nicest parts of doing a Ph.D. in France was the fact that she could say, "Well, I just have to go to France again this year..."

Donahue continues to collaborate extensively with colleagues in France, as well as in Germany, Brussels, the UK, Switzerland, and Canada. She belongs to the THEODILE research group (*Théorie et didactique de la lecture-écriture*) at the Université de Lille III and is an associated member of the CRIE research group (*Centre de recherche sur l'intervention éducative*) at the Université de Sherbrooke.

Donahue is a prolific researcher. Her recent publications in English include:

- "When Copying Is Not Copying: Plagiarism and French Composition Scholarship," in *Originality, Imitation, Plagiarism: Teaching Writing in the Digital Age*, U. of Michigan Press, 2008
- "Cross-Cultural Analysis of Student Writing: Beyond Discourses of Difference," in *Written Communication*, 25 (3)
- "Multiple Assessments of a First-year Seminar Pilot," in the *Journal of General Education* (in press) co-authored with biology professor Andrew Barto

Finally, Donahue has been awarded a research Fulbright for the France-Nord Pas de Calais region for next year. She expects that this Fulbright will be a terrific "next step" in her French research.

➤ Adapted with permission from:

Gocsik, Karen M. "New Director Christiane Donahue." [Institute for Writing and Rhetoric](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/program/donahue-news.html). 08 Oct. 2008. <<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/program/donahue-news.html>>.

## Undergraduate Curriculum News

The English Department has announced, with the Communication Studies Department, a new interdisciplinary minor in Rhetoric. The minor gives students a foundation in the classical rhetorical tradition as well as opportunities to consider contemporary theories and critical practices. The new minor is appropriate for any student interested in the ways that symbols work to influence thought and action and will likely attract students majoring in Communication Studies, English, History, Political Science, Philosophy, and Psychology, although students from any major are welcome.

The minor consists of five courses, including an introductory course taken in either English or Communication Studies as well as four electives. At least two courses must come from English and two from Communication Studies. Courses include the Classical Age of Speech and Rhetoric, Argumentation and Debate, Rhetoric of Law, The Writing Process, and Political Communication, among others. ➤ BB



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## Reception for Graduating Seniors

On May 1, 2008, the English Department hosted its second annual reception for graduating seniors. Over 100 people—graduates, family, friends, and faculty—attended the festivities, held in Kerr Hall. The event gave graduating students and their parents an opportunity to mingle informally with faculty and other students.

Erika Keith and Jacey Fortin, the graduating students with the highest and third highest GPAs respectively, gave moving remarks about their experiences in the English Department. (Stephen Mancuso, who earned the second highest GPA, was unable to attend.) Entertainment followed, with Joe Eveld reading from his poetry and Krista Sergi offering a performance of an original musical comedy based on one of her co-op experiences entitled "The Secret Lives of Librarians." ⌘ BB



Senior Joe Eveld shared his poetry at the 2008 graduation reception.

## Grewell at Thiel College

*Continued from page 4.*

According to Cory, his Northeastern Ph.D. served him well on the job market; in each of his job interviews, the committees he met with valued Northeastern as a "top-notch research institution."

In addition to literary interests in Shakespeare, Milton, and Jonson, Cory's non-literary interests include good food and wine – he is something of an oenophile – golf, softball, the Boston Red Sox, country and western music, and messing around with his 1980 Royal Knight El Camino. Cory lives in Greenville, PA, with his wife, Nicole, and his dachshund, Gatsby; they are expecting to add a son to their family in January. ⌘ EMD

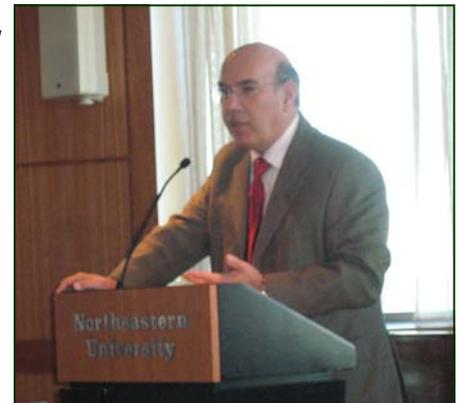
## Jay Parini Presents 2008 Peter Burton Hanson Lecture/Reading

On October 23, Jay Parini, D. E. Axinn Professor of English and Creative Writing at Middlebury College gave this year's presentation of the Peter Burton Hanson Reading/Lecture. Professor Parini is a poet, novelist, and scholar, whose most recent book, *Why Poetry Matters*, was published last April by Yale University Press. Professor Parini read from his own poetry and from those poets who helped form him, giving a spirited and often hilarious account of his personal journey from his boyhood in Scranton, Pennsylvania (where his mother and the VP-elect's mother, exchange notes on their prodigal sons) to his education abroad in Scotland and England, to his present life as a poet, scholar, and teacher.



Professors Patricia Sullivan, far left, and Carla Kaplan, second from left, smile as Jay Parini recounts his adventures in "babysitting" Borges.

Peter Burton Hanson, a former English Major — well loved and remembered by those who were his teachers — perished tragically in the events of 9/11 along with his wife, Sue Kim, and their young daughter, Christine. The Peter Burton Hanson lecture series was established through the generosity of Peter's parents, Lee and Eunice Hanson. The Hansons also support an undergraduate writing contest for English majors in the categories of creative writing and criticism to honor Peter's deep personal investment in both the creative and the critical aspects of his major. (The 2008 writing contest winners are listed on page 3.) We are extremely grateful not only for the Hanson's generosity in funding these activities but also for their ongoing participation as well as the profound kindness and warmth they have extended to our students at these occasions. ⌘ ML



Jay Parini, above. Among Parini's recent books are biographies of Robert Frost, William Faulkner, and John Steinbeck.

## ⌘ Acknowledgements ⌘

Heartfelt thanks go out to Beth Britt, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Tiane Donahue, and Marina Leslie for contributing articles to the Fall 2008 *Alumni e-Newsletter*. If you would like to contribute to a future edition of the *e-Newsletter*, please Drop Us A Line at <http://www.english.neu.edu/alumni/> or contact Melissa Daigle at [m\\_daigle@neu.edu](mailto:m_daigle@neu.edu).