



# The Literature Program

Texts & Technology

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## Alumni Newsletter, Fall 2004

It's that time of year again. The last tomatoes are ripe on the vine, the beaches have emptied of tourists, and the campus of the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey is bustling with activity. Not content with the futuristic glass enclosures which have suddenly sprung up around every outdoor stairway on campus, at this year's Fall Faculty Conference, President Herman Saatkamp announced an ambitious program of expansion, which will result in new dorms, new parking, and new academic facilities (not to mention new students and faculty) on campus in coming years. We will join the rest of the college community in officially welcoming President Saatkamp at his Presidential Inauguration ceremony on September 28th in the Performing Arts Center.

We've got some exciting news in the LITT Program as well. This fall we will begin the process of hiring two new faculty, we have some great news from our successful graduates and alumni, and we have a full slate of readings and events. Without further ado:

### **Fare-Thee-Well**

We bid a fond farewell to Stephen Dunn, the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet who has been the rock of our creative writing track for many years. Stephen recently announced that he will be retiring effective this spring. We look forward to reading more of Stephen's poetry in the future, and hope that he will continue to be a part of the LITT community in his retirement.

Professor Emeritus of Spanish Norma Grasso also recently retired. We will miss her and wish her well.

### **Kudos!**

Congratulations to Deborah Gussman, who was tenured this spring and shortly thereafter was elected by unanimous popular acclamation to be LITT Program coordinator for the next two years!

Congratulations to BJ Ward, LITT program alumnus, who has been hired to a one-year appointment to teach creative writing here at Stockton. We're glad to have BJ back as a colleague.

In the Spring 2004 commencement, 26 students graduated from Literature. Two Literature students graduated Summa Cum Laude: Matthew Lafferty and Noreen Vasilakis; and two graduated Cum Laude: Shaun Armstrong and Gary Hink.

Congratulations to all of our graduates! We are proud of all of you. Special kudos to those of you who have decided to continue your studies of literature at the graduate level. Gary Hink has been accepted into the SUNY Buffalo Department of English M. A. program. Rob Schmitt is doing graduate work in the English Department at Temple. Elaina Given is pursuing her Ph.D. at Drew University.

Kudos also to Laura Birchler and Alicia Guarracino, who were awarded Stockton Board of Trustees Fellowships for Distinguished Students during the Spring term, 2004. Ms. Birchler will be writing a series of interrelated short stories; Ms. Guarracino will be writing a series of interrelated poems.

Of course, there is life beyond school, and we would like to send out special congratulations to our alumni who are expecting new arrivals. Heather Martin is having a baby, and Christy Boutizous is expecting twins.

### **We're also expecting . . .**

Late this summer, we received news from the Provost that we have been cleared to advertise two positions in the LITT program. This year we will hire a fiction writer or poet to permanently replace Stephen Dunn, and a new position has also been authorized: we will be hiring a second Americanist. We look forward to the hiring process, to the expanded course offerings these hires will bring the program, and to better serving our ever-growing community of LITT students.

Is something exciting going on in your life? Be sure to drop [Deb Gussman](#), program coordinator, a line, so we can tell everyone about it.

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## LITT Program Fall 2004 Events

### Visiting Writers Series

MONDAY, OCTOBER 4th -- Jeffrey Eugenides

At 7PM in the Lakeside Center, Pulitzer Prize winner Jeffrey Eugenides will read from his acclaimed book, *Middlesex*. Mr. Eugenides was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1960. He graduated magna cum laude from Brown University and received an M. A. in English and Creative Writing from Stanford University in 1996. His first novel, *The Virgin Suicides*, was published to acclaim in 1993. It has been translated into fifteen languages and made into a feature film. His fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *The Yale Review*, *Best American Short Stories*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and *Granta's* "Best of Young American Novelists." In 2003, Jeffrey Eugenides received the Pulitzer Prize and the Great Lakes Book Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, for his novel *Middlesex*.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8th -- Sharon Olds

Sharon Olds's most recent books, published by A. A. Knopf, are *The Unswept Room* (2002), *Blood, Tin, Straw* (1999), *The Wellspring* (1996), *The Father* (1992), *The Gold Cell* (1987), and *The Dead and the Living* (1984), which was chosen as the Lamont Poetry Selection by The Academy of American Poets and received the National Book Critics Circle Award. *Satan Says* was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1980 and received the inaugural San Francisco Book Award. Ms. Olds teaches in the Graduate Creative Writing Program at New York University, and for eighteen years has helped run a writing workshop at the Sigismund Goldwater Memorial Hospital, a 900-bed state hospital for the severely physically challenged. In 1997, she received the Harriet Monroe Prize from the University of Chicago. From 1998-2000 she was New York State Poet Laureate. *The Unswept Room* was a finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics' Circle Award. Sharon Olds was named the 2003 James Merrill Fellow of the Academy of American Poets. She lives in New York City.

Sharon Olds's reading will be the annual Ravenswood Reading, our fundraiser in support of the series. Levels of Support: Haiku \$3 (Students w/ID), Limerick \$5 (Seniors 62+ w/ID), Sonnet \$10 (General Admission), Villanelle \$25, Sestina \$50, Ode \$100 and Epic \$500+. We welcome contributions to sustain the Visiting Writers Series. If you're interested in making a donation (of any size), please contact Lisa Honaker at 609-652-4760 or [Lisa.Honaker@stockton.edu](mailto:Lisa.Honaker@stockton.edu).

### The Digital Arts and Electronic Literature Series

Thanks to a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, this fall, a maelstrom of electronic literature activity is descending on the Atlantic City area, with The Digital Arts and Electronic Literature Series at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. There will be three panel events in the next three months. All three events will be held in the Arts and Sciences Lecture Hall at 7PM.

#### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24th -- Electronic Fiction

Two of the best-known authors of hypertext fiction, Talan Memmott and William Gillespie, will present their work and discuss electronic fiction. Both are graduate fellows in creative writing at Brown University, and both have been recipients of the trAce/AltX award for new media writing. Each is also known for publishing activities in the electronic media. Memmott is the editor of the [Beehive](#) hypermedia journal, and Gillespie the publisher of [Spineless Books](#).

#### FRIDAY OCTOBER 15th -- New Media History

The second event will feature two of the best-known critics of new media. [Nick Montfort](#) and [Noah Wardrip-Fruin](#), the co-editors of *The New Media Reader*, published by MIT Press, will give presentations on the history of new media. Montfort is the author of *Twisty Little Passages*, the first book-length study of interactive fiction, and Wardrip-Fruin is the editor of *First Person*, a book about interactive drama.

#### FRIDAY NOVEMBER 19th -- Digital Poetry

The final event in the series will feature Megan Sapnar and Ingrid Ankersen, the co-editors of the leading new media poetry journal [Poems That Go](#).

### **Student Reading**

THURSDAY OCTOBER 7th 8PM -- Interactive drama-esque narrative, poetry, and acoustics by Stockton LITT students Mark Baird, Laura Birchler, and Alicia Guarracino in the TRLC.

### **Meet and Greet**

THURSDAY OCTOBER 21st 4:30PM -- Join us in the TRLC for our annual fall gathering of LITT students and faculty. Snacks, beverage and literary discourse, free of charge.

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### **Faculty Research and Activities**

Lisa Honaker spent the summer teaching three courses online and

coordinating the college's Visiting Writers Series and Odyssey Project. On the scholarly front, her article "'One Man to Rely On': Long John Silver and the Shifting Character of Boys' Fiction" has come out in the Winter 2004 issue of *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory*. She and Professor Gussman also gave a presentation at the Stockton Federation of Teacher's End-of-Summer Workshop on "Media Literacy and Civic Engagement." When not working, she seemed to spend a lot of time swimming with her sons. Her tomatoes came in pretty well and have been tasty to boot.

Deborah Gussman celebrated her tenure this summer by vacationing with her family in Hawaii. Now back in the real world, she is teaching Literary Research for the first time, serving as the LITT program coordinator, and collaborating with Lisa Honaker on a rhetoric and composition reader.

Tom Kinsella spent a long summer waiting for the tomatoes in his backyard garden to ripen. They never really did--it's been a bad year for tomatoes in South Jersey. While he waited he worked on his study of colonial bookbinding. He also tucked in an essay on Arthur Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson*, the last great biography written within a decade of Johnson's death. Tom's got a bit more to do on his bookbinding study; the Murphy essay will be published in the annual *The Age of Johnson*.

(It's typical Kinsella humility to dwell on the unripened tomatoes -- the man has not a garden, but a fully functioning farm, in his back yard. I've seen it with my own eyes: trellises of beans, exotic purple potato plants, rows and rows of enough lettuce to provide salads for all the starving children in Dickensian London. The abundance of his agricultural output puts the rest of the LITT farmers to shame. --ed.)

This summer Scott Rettberg taught two courses and participated in two conferences: the trAce Incubation Symposium on Writing and the Internet at Nottingham Trent University, England, and the International Society for Electronic Arts Conference in Helsinki, Finland. The sticker novel he is writing with Nick Montfort, **Implementation**, is one installment away from completion, and the web site now includes over 900 photos of sticker placements in America and Europe. *Implementation* has been accepted for inclusion in the 2004 FILE International Electronic Language Festival in Sao Paulo, Brazil. In November, Scott will be a featured speaker at the Digital og Sosial conference in Bergen, Norway. His garden did fairly well this summer; photos of Scott's **tomatoes** can be found on his **blog**. He's also an active contributor to the research weblog **Grand Text Auto**.

Ken Tompkins recently secured an institutional grant that both outfitted

the LITT faculty with shiny new iBooks (thanks Ken!) and is enabling us to produce cutting-edge video modules to enhance our pedagogy. This summer, Ken and Scott led a LITT program workshop on producing video modules. The first fruits of these labors can be found in Ken's five-part tutorial " **Blogging Basics** ." Ken has also been piping up a storm with a Police and Fireman's marching bagpipe band.

In the last year, BJ Ward's poetry has appeared in the *2004 Pushcart Prize Anthology* (Pushcart Press), the *Painted Bride Quarterly* 2004 print anthology, *TriQuarterly*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Breath of Parted Lips: Voices from the Frost Place, Volume II* (CavanKerry Press). His most recent book, *Gravedigger's Birthday*, was listed as one of the two "Recommendations by the Editors" of *5 a.m.* in the summer 2004 issue, and it was shortlisted for last year's Paterson Poetry Prize. He has an essay about performance poetry forthcoming in *The Worcester Review* and poems forthcoming in *Nightsun* and *Exit 13*. He is currently working on a full-length play set in northwestern New Jersey, as well as poems (some of which are about his wonderful students).

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Whew! There's sure a lot going on around here. So that's what we're up to. How about you? Be sure to keep us informed of the goings-on in your lives. We're particularly interested in what you're doing with your careers. If you get a chance, drop  **Deb Gussman**  a line with news about your jobs and families.

All Best,

Scott Rettberg for

**The Literature Program**

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