

# THE IRREGULAR LITTONIAN

Spring 2012, Number 42

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Dear Alums,

Hello from the LITT Program! This edition of *The Irregular Littonian* brings you news and updates from our faculty and current students. In addition, we're featuring faculty descriptions of how their classrooms have changed—either in terms of their students or their pedagogy—over the years.

We invite you to join our annual *Really, Really Big LITT Bash* on April 20<sup>th</sup>, at 4.30pm in the Townsend Residential Life Center. Hope to see you there!

For the program,

Adeline Koh

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## Alumni Updates

Kimberly Grey has been chosen as a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Poetry at Stanford University. This prestigious fellowship is awarded to five fiction writers and five poets a year.

Toni Baisden received an Master of Arts in English from Arcadia University in December 2011.

Roni Bier was accepted into the Rhode Island Teaching Fellows program, beginning in June 2012.

Stephanie Cawley will be presenting on her work for *The Stockton Postcolonial Studies Project* at Re:Humanities '12, an undergraduate conference on the digital humanities at Bryn Mawr.

Mike Stafford has launched a website focused on literature, music and popular culture; check it out at: <http://www.literarydysfunction.com/>

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## Faculty Updates

**For this edition of *The Irregular Littonian*, LITT faculty have given us their usual research and life updates and answer the question: “How has your classroom changed since you began teaching?”**

### Deborah Gussman

*Deb Gussman has thought a lot about the Literature program and its recent history lately while researching and writing the report for our 5-year review. Having nearly completed that project, she can say that she is proud to be a member of such a dedicated, diverse, innovative, and engaged program, and is looking forward to upcoming conversations about the program’s future. Meanwhile, she is enjoying teaching two of her favorite courses: Native American Literature, and Literature by Women, and relishing the false spring in New Jersey, while it lasts.*

*About changes in the classroom, she says:*

My pedagogy hasn’t changed dramatically, though some of the tools I use in the classroom have. I certainly rely more on classroom management systems like Blackboard for communicating and discussing ideas outside of the classroom, and electronic classrooms make it easier to incorporate relevant contextual information in the class, whether it’s a YouTube clip of a blues tune mentioned in a short story, or material from a scholarly website devoted to a novel, such as “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture*” (<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/sitemap.html>). Perhaps the biggest change for my research and my classes comes from the explosion of online databases and archives related to American literature. Sites like the *Making of America* collection (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/>) and massive databases like Google Books make primary source material from the 19<sup>th</sup> century much more accessible, and allow me to create projects and assignments that give students the chance to do original research.

It’s hard to generalize about students; the main change I’ve noticed recently is the number of students who remain deeply interested in young adult fiction throughout college – I see this as a larger cultural trend as well, with millions of adults who are reading fiction series like *Twilight*, *Harry Potter*, etc. For some students, reading these kinds of books is a stepping-stone for and complements reading more conventionally “literary” works, while for others the taste for YA literature seems to dampen interest in exploring complex or experimental texts. I’d be interested in hearing from alum about the role YA literature played or plays in your reading tastes.

## **Adalaine Holton**

*This semester, Adalaine is enjoying teaching a Senior Seminar on History and Memory in Literature of the Americas. Students read works of critical theory about history and memory as well as works of twentieth-century literature from the Caribbean and the US.*

*As the current chair of the new Master of Arts in American Studies program, Adalaine is pleased to announce that the new graduate program will begin in the Fall 2012 semester. Course offerings next year include foundational courses in American Studies, along with electives such as "Literature of the Americas," "Nineteenth-Century American Art," and "Teaching History through Historic Places." Adalaine will be busy this summer caring for her first child, due at the end of May.*

*She shares with us her experiences transitioning to grading rubrics:*

When I first began teaching undergraduates about 14 years ago, my university did not offer letter grades. All graded work students produced in their literature courses received narrative evaluations, rather than numerical or letter grades. Instead of recording numerical grades in a grade book throughout the semester, as I do now, I would collect photocopies of the narrative comments I wrote on student papers. Final "grades," were reflective paragraphs instructors wrote about student performance after the semester had ended.

After I began teaching at institutions that offered letter grades, I retained my practice of writing long narrative comments on student essays, though I added numerical grades as well. These detailed comments, I believed, provided students with the individual attention all essays merit. Over time, however, I began to see that while some students may have appreciated the narrative feedback, others had a difficult time understanding the relationship of the numerical grade to my comments. In response, I began using grading rubrics to evaluate all student essays. By looking over the rubric, students could clearly identify the level of their performance in several specific areas. While I am now a firm believer in the efficacy of grading rubrics, I still see the value in a reflective narrative comment, so I continue to include a few sentences of narrative feedback at the bottom of each rubric.

## **Lisa Honaker**

*In January 2012, Lisa Honaker worked with Denise McGarvey to revise and remount the Stephen Dunn Manuscript Exhibit at the Seaview Hotel Art Gallery in connection with Peter Murphy's Winter Poetry and Prose Getaway in January. The exhibit closed March 10. Honaker is currently teaching a Senior Seminar on the Politics of the Postcolonial British Novel and a GAH course on Literature of the Environment. In connection with this latter course, she and Professors Patrick Hossay and TaitChirenje have coordinated a weekly speaker series on environmental issues in New Jersey and*

*will take a group of students to Yellowstone in May. She continues to be involved with community and political engagement initiatives on campus and with a group exploring the possibility of starting a digital press at Stockton. She is participating in a panel on Alice and Wonderland in March at the Noyes Museum and is working on a piece on the first ten years of the Booker Prize as well as her Reading the Bookers blog (<http://readingthebookers.com>).*

*On changes in her classroom, Lisa writes:*

Last fall, one of my Victorian Literature students read George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (over 800 pages) on her phone.

That pretty much encapsulates the changes I've seen in my students and my classroom. For good and for ill, they're all about the phone.

### **Marion Hussong**

*Marion Hussong is currently teaching a senior seminar on folk and fairytales and a graduate course titled "Art and Propaganda under National Socialism". She recently served as a textbook evaluator for the new edition of *Children's Books in Children's Hands* (Addison Wesley) and as a scholarly evaluator for Université Catholique de Leuven and Facultés Universitaires Saint Louis in Brussels, Belgium. She rated multiple applications for postdoctoral fellowships on an international interdisciplinary project titled *Writing under Totalitarianism*. Marion also continues her own research on the literature of Austrian resistance and is planning a research trip to Linz and Vienna, Austria. Currently, Marion serves as the coordinator of the LITT program and is an active member of Stockton's Veterans Advisory Board. She is hoping to take a road trip with her husband Joe to Alaska this summer. This should not be a problem, because their truck only has 285,000 miles on it. What could possibly go wrong?*

*Marion reflects on the changes in her pedagogy:*

As an instructor of cultural studies specializing in German and Austrian literature the Internet has changed my pedagogical environment profoundly for the better. I started teaching in the mid-1990s and vividly remember carrying magazines, newspapers, restaurant menus, expensive CDs, and even more expensive heavy art books in my suitcases every time I returned from a trip to Europe. All this just so that I could give my students a glimpse of life in Germany! Then I would go to work crafting collages, posters, and somewhat hokey show-and-tell boards while wondering how I could effectively show my pictures to all the students in class, which was no easy feat as no document cameras were available yet that could project images onto the screen!

Today, the world is at my fingertips, and I find myself scouring the web daily in search of authentic cultural material, which I then integrate into my classes. Many Stockton students have not had the opportunity to travel the world to interact with

different societies. I maintain a big database of cultural links, which I update all the time. Perhaps the most useful teaching tool for me has been Youtube with its ever-growing repertoire of authentic cultural sound and video bites.

I use the electronic equipment in my classroom every day and would probably now find it very difficult if not impossible to teach an effective course without electronic access. The digital age is here to stay and grow, and I regard this as a boon to my teaching.

### **Kristin Jacobson**

*Kristin J. Jacobson is on sabbatical this academic year. She is working on a book-length project focused on contemporary American nonfiction extreme adventure and survival narratives ("adrenaline narratives"). Dr. J is looking forward to teaching senior seminar in Fall 2012: the course will focus on contemporary American survival narratives (fiction and nonfiction) and environmental approaches to literature.*

*Kristin reflects on how her classroom has evolved:*

Henry David Thoreau writes in *Walden's* conclusion, "Things do not change; we change." My thoughts about how learning, students, and pedagogy have or have not changed over the years can best be explained in conversation with Thoreau: the "things" of teaching (technology, especially) have changed dramatically since I was an enrolled student, but I have probably changed in more fundamental ways and, hopefully, in ways that make me a better teacher. I owe much to my students and colleagues for this growth. I certainly "trouble myself" with newfangled pedagogical gadgets (I love my new iPad), and this is something for which Thoreau would scold me. Thoreau writes, "Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends." Nevertheless, Thoreau and I might agree that these technologies are the "clothes" that dress the fundamental learning goals to sharpen critical thinking, writing and reading skills. Even as my methods to accomplish these goals have changed and adopted new technologies, the goals themselves have not changed since I first started teaching college students in graduate school. Finally, Thoreau begins this passage in *Walden* by telling his reader to buck up and "live it [life]": "do not shun it and call it hard names." So much of what is written about how students have changed is negative: "The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise." And so, I embrace change. While my pedagogy may not "Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage," it strives to tap the deep roots that have long sustained me as a student.

### **Cynthia King**

*Cynthia King has a great group of students in the spring for her American Literature I course, her Contemporary American Literature course and her new GIS Politics of Food*

*course. They are all bringing serious issues, personal and political to their classroom discussions and have been participating in the class blogs with assignments like "Food Challenges," and close readings. Over Christmas, Dr. King's second book Manifest won the Gatewood Prize from Switchback Books -- judged by Harryette Mullen -- and she has had new poems published in the new issue of esque, etc.*

*On how her teaching has changed since she began:*

Since I started teaching in 1996, I'd say my assignments have become less about what I think students should know and more about finding out what they already know and can build on. This includes asking them not so much to read and report on what they have read through written response, but asking them to do research on their own and reflect in journals about what conclusions they feel comfortable formulating about any given subject. Students in my courses also do a lot more thinking about how several subjects come together in any given day's class discussion.

### **Tom Kinsella**

*Tom Kinsella is still preoccupied by the smaller bits of literature. He taught his Grammar course last Summer and Fall – its twentieth anniversary year. Now he's teaching Punctuation: History & Craft for the second time and enjoying the experience, notice the comma?*

*He has also been thinking about South Jersey. If interested, join him on May 12<sup>th</sup> at the new campus center for an all-day symposium on John McPhee's The Pine Barrens. It's been forty-five years since the publication of this locally significant text. In the interim, what has changed about our Pine Barrens? What has remained the same? The symposium is free – there will be a piney-themed lunch – it will be fun. For details, visit <http://wp.stockton.edu/sjchc/>.*

*On his pedagogy, Tom says:*

In the early 1990s I was likely to field a line-up of courses such as Milton, Introduction to Drama, and Writing in the Electronic Age, a W1 General Studies course. I didn't build walls around these courses, obvious connections were surely made, but I did tend to keep the course material pretty separate. Lately, I'm attempting to tie disparate courses more closely. This semester I am teaching Punctuation, Intro to Research, and Medieval Irish Literature. Pretty different, you would think. But I've been looking for common threads and blogging modestly about them here:

<http://wp.stockton.edu/s2012>

I figure if students or others read the blog (I project it on the overhead before class), perhaps they'll get a sense of an intellectual canvas larger than that usually found in

one course. Maybe they'll be nudged to make connections in other classes. It's an experiment that so far I am enjoying.

### **Adeline Koh**

*This semester, Adeline Koh has incorporated Twitter in all her classes. Her students use Twitter to take notes during class, to ask questions, and to post comments during film screenings. She is pleased that most of them report that it is a helpful learning tool. She is very proud that that three of her students--Svetlana Fenichel, Kimone Hyman and Stephanie Cawley--have been accepted to present on The Stockton Postcolonial Studies Project (<http://wp.stockton.edu/postcolonialstudies>) at Re:Humanities, an undergraduate conference on digital humanities to be held at Bryn Mawr College. Adeline has also coordinated the Conversations in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Series, which is organizing a special event on the 'Semiotics of Feminism in Political Conservatism' for Women's History Month (<http://wp.stockton.edu/wgssconversations>).*

*On the research front, Adeline has published two articles on digital publishing in the Profhacker column at the Chronicle of Higher Education, and has a series of interviews with academic presses and libraries forthcoming. She has also won a Humanities Writ Large visiting faculty fellowship at Duke University, where she will be working on her book, *Cosmopolitan Whiteness*, and developing an Alternate Reality/Role Playing Game called *Trading Races* for use in undergraduate classes on race and ethnicity.*

*On changes in her pedagogy, she tells us:*

As the years have passed I have employed the Socratic method of questioning more and more while teaching. This means that after I explain an idea, I ask my students to walk me through the concept I have just taught, and then ask them leading questions to see if they completely understand it. While some of my students have commented that this method is somewhat intimidating, they overwhelmingly report that this makes them remember the material much better. In the coming years, I am excited to see how I can employ social media to engage with more students on this level.

### **Nathan Long**

*Nathan Long is on sabbatical, working on a collection of linked short stories titled *The Sleep of Reason*. Since his sabbatical started last summer, he has had a nine pieces published or accepted for publication, including a poem on the Sonora Review website and a short story in the Philadelphia Press anthology *Stripped* (March 2012).*

*He has been fortunate to join two on-going, professional workshops based out of the*

*University of Penn's Kelly Writer's House, and has started an informal writing group of his own. He presented "Taking from the Past: Three Rivers of Sexuality Converging," a memoir/essay, at the Southern Humanities Conference in Feb., 2012, and read his most recent fiction for the Stockton Day of Scholarship in March.*

*He looks forward to returning to the classroom in the Fall, offering Intro to Creative Writing, Queer Autobiography (GAH), and a senior seminar on Flash Fiction (stories under 2000 words), which will be open to both Literature and Creative Writing track students.*

*He writes about his changing classroom:*

When I first started teaching, I was just a few years older than my students and could even pretend to be one of them, which made for an interesting and surprising first day of class, especially when I choose to sit in one of the student seats, wait a bit, and then start class.

As a young teacher, I had a great deal of energy, but also a great deal of disorganization. To some degree, those two have flipped over the years, though I still have a great love of teaching and of my subjects, especially creative writing-- I'm just more likely to exhibit it in a quieter way.

I feel the real changes that have taken place for me as a teacher are how I use my experience. I like to think I can more quickly identify problems in a piece of writing, or in the classroom, have a better sense of what they are, and have more tools for working out those problems, ideally with less conflict.

At the same time, I've come to accept that while my style of teaching can always be improved, there are certain styles that feel natural to each teacher, and we can't always adopt another's style, even if it works well for them.

Over the years, I become more and more impressed with my students, their work, and the way they shuffle complex lives and obligations. I use to believe that my role was to keep students in school, no matter what. Now, I see my role as one that can help students decide what is best for them, even if it means for some leaving school for a while, or choosing another path. That is, the student's overall life becomes more important than just academics.

### **Adam Miyashiro**

*Adam Miyashiro has working to continue his projects that bring Stockton College into greater contact with medieval studies in the region. Last December, he brought two Literature majors and Sigma Tau Delta (Literature Honors Society) members to the 6th Annual Moravian College Undergraduate Conference in Medieval and Early Modern Studies, in Bethlehem, PA. Sviatlana Fenichel and Tania Rivera presented*



*papers on medieval topics originally researched in their courses with Prof. Miyashiro.*

*On February 18, Prof. Miyashiro organized the first of two Spring semester meetings of the Delaware Valley Medieval Association, a regional group of the Medieval Academy's Committee on Centers and Regional Associations (CARA). Among the speakers were two graduate students from the University of Pennsylvania's Comparative Literature program, a junior faculty colleague (Aaron Hostetter) at Rutgers-Camden, Teofilo Ruiz (Spanish, UCLA), and Stockton's own David King (LANG). At this DVMA meeting, we had faculty and students attend from all over New Jersey and Pennsylvania – Temple, Penn, Montclair State, Princeton, Rider, and others – as well as Stockton students and alumni. The presentations covered areas such as English, German, Spanish, and French literature and history. The first meeting of the DVMA at Stockton College was a success and Prof. Miyashiro looks forward to welcoming future meetings of the association.*

*Prof. Miyashiro is also planning a Rare Books trip to the Van Pelt Rare Books room at the University of Pennsylvania in April for interested Literature and humanities students. On this trip, students will be able to view rare manuscripts and early printed books, tour the library and speak with librarians and curators, as well as wander through the Art and Archaeology Museum. Last year, Prof. Miyashiro brought students to the Free Library of Philadelphia, and this trip looks to expose students to other Rare Books collections in the area. Future trips look north to Princeton and New York collections.*

*He tells us the following about changes in his classes:*

Since arriving at Stockton College in 2009, I have changed my teaching practices considerably to target students' interests in pursuing specialized study in medieval literature and languages. One such development has been the Old English Reading Group (in Old English, Eald Englisc Ræding Geferræden) for students interested in learning to read the language of Anglo-Saxon England (roughly around 1000 years ago). This is the language of the poem Beowulf as well as lyric poetry and chronicle writings. Utilizing our students knowledge of modern English, and easing them into reading Old English, the group has progressed incredibly in reading poetic texts in their original. One student in the group commented after one of our meetings that this was the most exciting and fun (albeit challenging) extracurricular activity he has been involved in at Stockton. When he first entered Stockton, he told me that he focused on hurrying up and getting his degree, but the reading group reminded him that Stockton is also a place where he can learn something that he had been previously unaware. I was surprised by this reaction, but it also confirms that students do want this type of training not only for their future careers, but also for personal enrichment. I plan to run this reading group again in Fall 2012, because it is not only rewarding for my students, but incredibly fun for me as well.