WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

GREETINGS, FRIENDS, ALUMNI, STUDENTS, STAFF, COLLEAGUES.

I write this on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021. I have just read scores of people writing about what in most accounts was an extremely difficult year—viruses, deaths, malignant race relations, climate disasters, isolation, mourning, depression, Zoom fatigue. I won’t belabor the obvious. The morning news is dominated by the surge of the Omicron variant; I hope that by the time you read this the coronavirus will have subsided once again. But in the midst of such bad tidings comes this year’s department newsletter, a burst of good news. With fortitude, courage, steadfastness, buoyancy, resilience, the Department of English faculty members and students forge ahead with teaching, learning, mentoring, writing, creativity, accomplishments, prizes, awards, collective endeavors and care for the good of our local community and networks of people reaching far beyond the university. Reading all this has been a tonic for me. I recommend that you read it too. I look forward to spring semester 2022, my last semester here, expecting more of the same from our extraordinary colleagues, students, and staff. The greeting of the next newsletter will be written by a new department chair, who I know will join all of you in making a fresh start in sustaining, building, and improving the department, its mission, and its wide-reaching effectiveness. Meanwhile, my best wishes to you all.

Warmly,

Randall Knoper
Chair, Department of English

THANKS FOR EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE ARE OWED TO MEG CAULMARE AND JENNIFER JACOBSON.
DEPARTMENT NEWS

Martin Espada won the National Book Award for his book Floater, a collection of poetry that runs from scathing socio-political commentary to homages of family and love. Espada bears eloquent witness to confrontations with anti-immigrant bigotry as a tenant lawyer years ago, and today he sings the praises of Central American adolescents kicking soccer balls over a barbed wire fence in an internment camp founded, he says, on that same bigotry. He also believes that times of hate call for poems of love—even in the voice of a cantankerous Galápagos tortoise.

“Martin Espada is one of the most important poets of his generation, and with good reason,” said UMass Amherst Chancellor Kumble R. Subbaswamy. “His poignant and cantankerous Galápagos tortoise.

Espada has published more than 20 books as a poet, essayist, editor, and translator. Other collections of his poems include Vivas to Those Who Have Failed, The Trouble Ball and Alabama. His honors include the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the Shelley Memorial Award, a Robert Creeley Award, a National Hispanic Cultural Center Literary Award, a PEN/Revson Fellowship, an Academy of American Poets Fellowship and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Espada also was named in the inaugural cohort of the Letras Boricuas Fellowship, a new award created by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Fluminboyan Foundation. Espada was in the inaugural cohort of Letras Boricuas Fellows, 20 Puerto Rican writers whose dynamic work spans genres including fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and children’s literature.

Laura Doyle was awarded the Chancellor’s Leadership Fellowship. The fellowships provide faculty members with a unique opportunity to participate in ADVANCE’s program of institutional transformation. Doyle co-edited (with Lydia M. Heberling) a special issue of Studies in American Indian Literatures, “Reimagining Native California with Deborah Miranda’s Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir,” and was elected vice president of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures. She will serve a two-year term before becoming president. Finally, Doyle’s essay, “The Archives of Deborah Miranda’s Bad Indians,” published in the spring/summer 2021 issue of Studies in American Indian Literatures, received an honorable mention for the American Literature Society’s 1921 Prize for Best Essay in American Literature by a tenured faculty member.

Rebecca Lorimer Leonard was named as a Public Engagement Project (PEP) 2021 Faculty Fellow. Lorimer Leonard will partner with local nonprofits to write materials for education policymakers and practitioners that build on the strengths that multilingual people bring to writing situations. The PEP Fellows Program facilitates connections between fellows and lawmakers on Beacon Hill and in the U.S. Congress, journalists, practitioners and others to share their research beyond the walls of academia.

Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina was elected to the Board of Biographers International. This professional organization hosts an annual conference and brings together biographers from around the world for prizes and talks, usually held at the Leon Levy Center for Biography at NYU. Gerzina joined the Editorial Advisory Board of Edinburgh University Press for a new book series, Virginia Woolf—Variations. Gerzina also has been asked to edit a volume on Virginia Woolf and race.

Haivan Hoang’s keynote lecture “Why Race Matters when Writing in the Disciplines” began the University of Connecticut Writing Center’s conference on Racism in the Margins. She shared insights from her in-progress interview-based study on how race becomes salient for teachers and students in discipline-specific writing courses at UMass Amherst.

Rebecca Dingo has recently been named as an incoming co-editor of Poitho, the peer-reviewed journal of the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CSWSRC). Dingo’s, with co-editor Clancy Ratcliffe, first issue will be 24.1, fall 2021. Published quarterly, Poitho exists to support the Coalition’s mission: to encourage, advance, and publish innovative “feminist research across histories, locales, identities, materialities, and media.”

Laura Furlan was awarded an ADVANCE Faculty Fellowship. The fellowships provide faculty members with a unique opportunity to participate in ADVANCE’s program of institutional transformation. Furlan co-edited (with Lydia M. Heberling) a special issue of Studies in American Indian Literatures, “Reimagining Native California with Deborah Miranda’s Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir,” and was elected vice president of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures. She will serve a two-year term before becoming president. Finally, Furlan’s essay, “The Archives of Deborah Miranda’s Bad Indians,” published in the spring/summer 2021 issue of Studies in American Indian Literatures, received an honorable mention for the American Literature Society’s 1921 Prize for Best Essay in American Literature by a tenured faculty member.

MARTÍN ESPADA

Martin Espada was awarded a Letras Boricuas Fellowship, a $25,000 award for Puerto Rican writers from The Mellon Foundation and the Fluminboyan Foundation. Espada will be in the inaugural cohort of Letras Boricuas Fellows, 20 Puerto Rican writers whose dynamic work spans genres including fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and children’s literature.

Laura Doyle was awarded a $500,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create a Mellon Fellows Program and a Graduate Certificate Program in Decolonial Global Studies. The certificate will be available at the Mellon Fellows Program and a Graduate Certificate Program in Decolonial Global Studies. The certificate will highlight both the collective histories hidden—or stricken—from view by colonialist narratives and the perspectives and values that can address struggles in the world today.

Espada or sometimes wonder if words are going to be enough … But then you write the next poem.”

Debate on campus and by providing shadowing and mentoring from the leaders of the host units. Doyle and Mwangi Iva Githihi, associate professor of economics, were awarded a $500,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create a Mellon Fellows Program and a Graduate Certificate Program in Decolonial Global Studies. The certificate will highlight both the collective histories hidden—or stricken—from view by colonialist narratives and the perspectives and values that can address struggles in the world today.

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For several years now, the department has been trying a new approach to community-building among our undergraduates: the Student Advisory Board (SAB), a small group of English majors who enroll in a weekly practicum, Leadership in English Studies, and serve as a voice for both students before the department, and for the department before students.

Last spring the group organized a successful fundraising effort, which paid for the design and production of department T-shirts. SAB members also represent English at majors’ fairs and recruitment events. They participate every semester at our Orientation for New Majors, and every spring at Destination Day for prospective students.

But the main project recently has been peer advising, an attempt to offer our majors with a student perspective as they register for classes, as well as providing new majors with role models who can help welcome them to and steer them through the major.

Here are the Student Advisory Board members for 2021-22, in their own words.

Allysa Cayabyab is a junior English major from Oakville, Conn. She is also majoring in legal studies and pursuing the certificate in medical humanities.

“Coming from a family of people virtually all in the medical field, I felt a lot of pressure to follow in their footsteps. However, by the time I was in high school, I knew that I wanted to pursue a different path. I fell in love with literature and writing with an intensity I never really felt when studying anatomy or chemistry. It also didn’t hurt that my English classes with an intensity I never really felt when studying anatomy or chemistry. It also didn’t hurt that my English teachers were some of the greatest people I have ever known.”

Kate Nadolski is a junior English major from Upton, Mass. She is also majoring in Spanish, specializing in professional writing and technical communication, and minoring in business.

“Four years ago, I never would have imagined that I'd be writing a 50-page paper on such a topic! The English department has opened up a completely new world for me, and I couldn't have chosen a better major.”

Leila Elguessab is a senior English major from Falmouth, Mass. She is also specializing in professional writing and technical communication, minoring in economics, and writing an honors thesis.

“Students often think of majorsing in English, they think of struggling through dense literature, writing papers, and learning how to guide the youth of tomorrow through Shakespeare and Hemingway. My classes have taught me that English is far more than that. Yes, I write traditional essays, but I’ve also learned to write grant proposals and instruction manuals (it's more interesting than you might think!). I've read some Shakespeare, but I've also learned about amazing contemporary authors like Carmen Maria Machado and Alison Bechdel. One of my favorite classes, with Professor Suzanne Daly, focused on monstrosity in the Victorian era, which led to my senior thesis topic: Egyptomania and the New Woman in Victorian literature. Four years ago, I never would have imagined that I’d be writing a 50-page paper on such a topic! The English department has opened up a completely new world for me, and I couldn’t have chosen a better major.”

—David Fleming, Director, Undergraduate Studies
As I look back on 2021, I am filled with admiration for the extraordinary resilience and collaborative support exhibited by our graduate community. Many students confronted significant financial and personal challenges because of the pandemic. Many demonstrated tremendous fortitude in meeting their commitments to their studies, as well as to their own students, in the midst of extreme instability and unknowns. I was heartened to see so many grads finding ways to connect with and support one another, often from positions of isolation and across significant physical distances. While the hardships suffered by our community cannot be underestimated, these challenges have also served in some cases to clarify our commitments and to strengthen our bonds.

A number of students achieved important milestones in 2021. Eleven students defended their dissertations and received their PhDs: Michelle Brooks, Jodie Childers, Hayley Cotter, Catherine Elliott, Becky Friedman, Sean Gordon, Andrea Griswold, Kelin Loe, Darren Lone Fight, and Korka Sall. Nine students passed their area exams: Ashley Center, Jarrel DeMatas, Caroline Heafey, Bo Jimenez, Elena Kalodner-Martin, Jeremy Levine, Danielle Pappo, Nick Sancho-Rosi, Tyler Smart, and Thakshala Tissera. And three students passed their advisory or qualifying exam: Rowshan Chowdhury, and Jarrel DeMatas, are hard at work with plans for an exciting conference this spring.

This fall we welcomed a small incoming class of talented PhD students, including Oscar Garcia, Nicole O’Connell, Sam Davis, Alejandro Beas Murillo, and Tim Ong. We also welcomed three wonderful MA students: Jessica Farris, Bill Holt, and Jacob Bibeault. We look forward to getting to know these students better in the coming year and helping them to pursue their goals, as well as to welcoming a larger incoming class next fall.

Adapting to meet the conditions of the pandemic, the English Graduate Organization developed professional and social programming and organized an anti-racism committee and reading group. EGO Conference co-chairs Mitia Nath and Thakshala Tissera hosted a successful online conference in the spring of 2021 on the important theme of “Climate, Culture, Capital: Conversations and Conflicts.” This year’s co-chairs, Rowshan Chowdhury and Jarrel DeMatas, are hard at work with plans for an exciting conference this spring.

Having stepped into Graduate Program Directorship (GPD) just a few months ago, I am especially grateful to Daniel Sack for managing the program and supporting our graduate students throughout much of 2021. During his three-year term as GPD, Daniel approached his responsibilities with great care and compassion. His dedication is much appreciated. Mazen Naous continued to advise students through the job search process, helping students to obtain tenure track jobs and other positions despite the significant challenges of the market. Throughout the trials of the past year, Wanda Bak has continued to support the Grad Office in invaluable ways by looking out for the needs of each student and helping to solve problems whenever they emerge. We thank her for her devoted care and loyalty.

—Jane Hwang Degenhardt, Director of Graduate Studies
As we continue to navigate pandemic era strategies, MFA students remain steadfast in their commitment to teaching, learning, and community engagement. Through internships and professional development, emerging poets and writers build a foundation for careers in the literary arts, and create a positive impact on the commonwealth and beyond.

Writing, reading, and pursuing a life in the literary arts—the cornerstones of the MFA program—sustained our graduate students during lockdown. While the majority of the MFA's 60 credits come from workshops and literature classes, students have 18 electives to explore a passion, complete a certificate program, or focus on professional development. More than ever, students are using these electives to build skills and make connections through publishing, literary arts management, and community engagement. Here are some projects students have been pursuing to prepare themselves for a life in the literary arts.

Housed by the MFA, the Juniper Summer Writing Institute and Juniper Institute for Young Writers employ program assistants and creative writing instructors from the MFA and English PhD programs. The institutes offer substantial work experience in literary arts management and teaching. These programs now include an online winter workshop series and summer programs for teens, along with an in-person institute for adults in June.

Paperbark is a new biannual print and digital magazine managed and operated by UMass graduate students. Paperbark traces the connections between science, art, and the environment. Issue #3 will launch in March 2022. Students also read fiction and poetry submissions for The Massachusetts Review, an award-winning literary magazine promoting social justice and equality. Drizzle Review, launched by an MFA alum, organizes internships to help prioritize work by authors of marginalized identities, and to design graphics for social media campaigns. Peach Mag, a literary project founded by a second-year MFA candidate, arranges internships to assist with website development. Students interested in learning about judging book prizes can collaborate with faculty judges at the UMass Press reading fiction, nonfiction, and poetry book submissions for the annual Juniper Literary Prizes.

MFA students intern and work beyond UMass as well. This includes producing a reading series at the indie bookstore, Book Moon in Easthampton, Mass.; working with Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation to center and honor the traditions and aesthetics of writers of color; and running teen workshops at the Clarion West Writers Workshop designed to empower youth and help them discover their voices through writing speculative fiction.

If you can offer an internship or professional development opportunity to MFA candidates, please reach out to Jennifer Jacobson, jenniferj@umass.edu, 413-545-5510.

—Jennifer Jacobson, Associate Director, MFA for Poets and Writers

Through internships and professional development, emerging poets and writers build a foundation for careers in the literary arts, and create a positive impact on the commonwealth and beyond.”
We welcome students and visitors to the Renaissance Center to work with the rare materials in our collection, and are especially eager to welcome English students working on the environmental humanities pathway.

At the Renaissance Center, we’ve been exploring what it means to generate “Grounded Knowledge.” Inspired by the desire to link hands-on practice with literary and historical knowledge production, our Grounded Knowledge workshops bring together local artists, farmers, herbalists, and chefs with students and scholars to explore connections between the Renaissance kitchen gardens and apple orchard, and our rare book collection, including: agricultural treatises, gardening manuals, early modern literature, and early earth science writing.

This past year, we focused on bees in an event co-hosted by UMass alumna Jade Alicandro Mace of Milk and Honey Herbs, and Haylie Swenson, PhD, of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Our conversations included bee-keepers, herbalists, environmental historians, food scientists, and literary scholars. Each participant created their own herbal honey infusion with plants from the center’s garden. We also hosted a workshop themed around preservation with Matt Kaminsky of Gnarly Pippins and Marissa Nicosia, PhD, University of Pennsylvania, Abington. This workshop included a practicum for updating a Renaissance recipe for today’s modern kitchen and a lively discussion about apple seeds, grafting, and the hidden knowledge we might recover from women’s kitchen recipes. Upcoming workshops will focus on seed stories in global landscapes.

We welcome students and visitors to the Renaissance Center to work with the rare materials in our collection, and are especially eager to welcome English students working on the environmental humanities pathway. We’ve added several new rare books to the center’s collection, which is open to students and the public every weekday. Now on display in our exhibition gallery is William Lawson’s *A New Orchard and Garden* (1648), a text concerned with the management of gardens and includes special instructions for the country housewife. Also on display is Thomas Burnet’s *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684), which imagines the earth as a hollow shell filled with water, depicting the flood as rising waters from within. Something of an early geologist, Burnet also forecasted the possibility of impending natural disasters, many of which we experienced this past year in devastating floods along coastlines and inland waterways around the globe. Please reach out if you are interested in viewing a book or joining our network of students, alumni, and researchers involved in our Grounded Knowledge workshops.

We welcomed Emma Zimmerman Greenlee as our first Renaissance of the Earth Fellow. Emma is pursuing her master’s degree in forest resources and arboriculture through UMass Amherst’s Department of Environmental Conservation where her research focuses on the creation and stewardship of food forests, particularly by indigenous peoples prior to European colonization of the Americas.

Please visit our website to learn of our upcoming events, our work study and internship opportunities. As we look ahead to next summer’s plans to dig into the past in our gardens, orchard and rare book library, I welcome you to reach out with expressions of interest in joining a campuswide team of student scholars exploring the Renaissance of the Earth.

For more information, visit: umass.edu/renaissance.

—Marjorie Rubright,
Director, Kinney Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies
UMASS WRITING PROGRAM

In 2021, the UMass Amherst Writing Program remains a vital component of UMass Amherst’s General Education program, offering two courses—College Writing and Writing, Identity, and Power—to nearly every first-year student on campus (~5,000) taught by 110 graduate student and lecturer instructors, predominantly from the English department. The UMass Amherst Writing Center also continues to support the writing success of hundreds of UMass students across all majors and disciplines.

The Writing Program has been busy amidst the return to in-person instruction but still accomplished several exciting innovations in 2021. Under the continued leadership of Anna Rita Napoletone, PhD, the UMass Writing Center added new winter session tutoring specifically geared to supporting graduate students working toward completion of high stakes writing projects. Assistant Director Elkie Burnside, PhD, initiated a program-wide curriculum assessment, in partnership with UMass Amherst’s Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, to improve educational outcomes for undergraduate College Writing students. So far, the assessment team has collected 61 instructor surveys and conducted three instructor focus groups with the goal of building a baseline understanding of how program instructors understand and teach the curriculum. Directors Anne Bello and Rebecca Lorimer Leonard worked to pilot a new course placement model called Directed Self Placement, which guides students through a series of writing activities and reflections to help them choose a course placement, saving staff labor and educating students about College Writing even before they start the class.

The Writing Program also took concrete steps toward its goal of moving multimodality and linguistic diversity to the core of our curriculum. The program continued to carefully incorporate commitments to linguistic inclusivity, treating multiple languages and English dialects as assets in learning to write, into a revised program mission statement and revised learning outcomes on our standard syllabus. Lecturer Shakuntala Ray, PhD, and Leonard led a Social Justice Fellows group of 12 graduate student instructors who designed socially-just curricular or programmatic changes, including projects such as “Composing Citizens in the Writing Classroom” (designed by Thakshala Tissera) and “Critical Approaches to the Personal Archive” (designed by Sarah Ahmad). In a demonstration of the best work such revisions can accomplish, Burnside led a team of graduate students through the months-long process of revising one of College Writing’s required textbooks into an open access (no cost) course text, diversifying the textbook’s range of student writing examples and lowering first-year students’ textbook expenses.

Writing Program faculty also earned an impressive set of fellowships, grants, and awards last year in accessible curriculum design, flexible hybrid learning models, and DEI integration. Ray won a Teaching for Inclusiveness, Diversity, and Equity (TIDE) ambassadors fellowship; Peggy Woods, PhD, and Bello, PhD, restarted their “Voices of UMass” Campus Climate Improvement grant put on pause by the pandemic; Leonard won a Mellon Mutual Mentoring Micro grant; and Burnside and Aaron Tilman became FLEXLearning fellows for the Writing Program through the Center for Teaching and Learning. We look forward to seeing in the coming year how these professional development opportunities further shape our central mission of supporting UMass students’ writing education.

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WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS WRITING PROJECT

In 2021, the Western Massachusetts Writing Project (WMWP) leadership team continued its commitment to teachers, students, and communities by collaborating with K-12 teachers in western Massachusetts on pressing issues centered on teaching and learning.

Given the coronavirus crisis and the ongoing political and racial tensions, the WMWP continues to focus its efforts on equity, access, and social justice. The WMWP has offered courses and workshops centered on social justice teaching and learning. In spring 2021, the WMWP offered the course on Teaching for Racial Justice. The course was facilitated by Momodou Sarr, co-director of Language Culture and Diversity, and Kelly Norris (Mimnechaug Regional High School). The course has been adapted for a professional development series that can be offered to school districts. Both the course and the workshop explicitly address privilege, equity, and cultural responsiveness in the schools’ content curriculum and social environment.

WMWP also formed an online professional learning community in the spring called Toward an Anti-Racist Literature Curriculum. The group included over 20 teachers from four states. Several members worked on two initiatives over the summer and fall: a professional development series for school districts and a co-created, co-taught graduate course in which 12 of the participants led workshop sessions and facilitated online discussions.

The WMWP’s fall conference, Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing, was held on Oct. 30, 2021. The keynote speaker for the conference was Darnell Williams, assistant director of professional development at the Collaborative for Educational Services for the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYSS) Education Initiative. His areas of expertise include culturally responsive practices, positive youth development, eliminating the achievement gap, courageous conversations regarding social justice and equity, and implicit bias in educational settings.

The WMWP continued its effort to offer strong teacher-led programs in collaboration with the National Writing Project. In the summer of 2021, WMWP was pleased to offer the College, Career, and Community Writers Program (C3WP) for the fourth consecutive year. Students whose teachers used C3WP materials showed statistically significant growth in four areas of argumentative writing: content, structure, stance, and conventions. Students also “demonstrated greater proficiency in the quality of reasoning and use of evidence in their writing” (SRI International). These same results were documented by teachers from schools in western and central Massachusetts and teachers and coaches from the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services who participated in the program.

With the coming year, the WMWP will continue to focus on equity diversity and inclusion by reimagining and reassessing its various core programs, such as the Summer Leadership Institute where K-college teachers participate in writing, reading, and reflective inquiry. The Leadership Institute has been offered for almost 30 years and is the core program of the WMWP. This coming year we are particularly interested in working with teachers from urban districts and welcome any and all alumni to contact us for more information at wmwp@english.umass.edu.

‘“Given the coronavirus crisis and the ongoing political and racial tensions, the WMWP continues to focus its efforts on equity, access and social justice.”’

Keynote speaker for WMWP’s fall conference Darnell Williams

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AFFILIATED PROGRAMS

PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Graduates of the program for professional writing and technical communication now number more than 400. Each year several return (in person or of late, remotely) and share with current students’ perspectives from an impressive range of careers: commercial and academic publishing, law, medicine, and of course—technical writing and UX design. Among the visiting luminaries this year was one of the program’s first graduates, Cara Viktovor ’98, now content strategist and designer, CIO Design, BIM. In spring 2021, Cara and her entire five-person design team took time from their day to share insights and offer guidance.

In 2021, Professor Janine Solberg designed and initiated an ongoing partnership with UMass Instructional Technologies. The partnership provides hands-on experience for students through apprenticeships and a practicum. It also assists UMass Instructional Technologies by applying best practices in UX to the university’s learning management systems, giving greater attention to universal design, accessibility, and design justice, and thereby improving the technology experience for the entire UMass Amherst community.

Job placements from spring through summer and fall would be counted as quite robust even in a normal year, and 2021 was anything but normal. That so many freshly-minted grads found safe harbor is evidence—as if more were needed—of their high caliber as aspiring professionals.

A partial list of 2021 placements is below.

—Janine Solberg and David Toomey, Co-directors, Program for Professional Writing and Technical Communication

LIVE PERFORMANCE: INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL IMMERSION

This past summer would have marked the 14th year of the Department of English’s summer study-abroad course, Alternative Theaters: Navigating the Edinburgh Festival, which is administered in collaboration with the University of New Mexico. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is the world’s largest arts festival featuring more than 3,500 performances each day spread across 400 different venues. Every August the Scottish city is alive with art and festive celebration. After a year’s hiatus because of the pandemic, we had great hopes about returning in 2021. Unfortunately, the festival organizers were forced to offer a reduced program for the second year in a row. After deliberation, we decided to suspend our course once more, with the hopes that we would be able to return to a renewed and expanded festival in 2022.

—Daniel Sack, Program Advisor, Live Performance: International Theatre Festival Immersion

OXFORD SUMMER SEMINAR

After a hiatus in 2020 due to the pandemic, the first pause of the program in its 54 years of existence, the UMass Oxford Summer Seminar was back in the summer of 2021. Covid obliged, the program had to adapt in many ways to guarantee the safety and satisfaction of our beloved seminarians. Amongst the many changes that affected the seminar this summer were the reduced number of seminarians (down to 21), the five-day mandatory quarantine in isolation upon arrival (which proved to be quintessential to fight jetlag), the segregation of seminarians into households guaranteeing social distancing (the Pope and Durham households who competed for the highly coveted “House Cup”), and, of course, the multiple NHS lateral-flow rapid antigen Covid tests administered twice weekly (Monday and Thursday mornings) through the six weeks of the program (for a grand total of 216 tests). The vigilance of our seminarians under the guidance of our sole junior dean extraordinaire, Victoria Disalvo (seminarian 2018, JD 2019, 2020, and 2021) and graduate assistant, Caroline Heafey, resulted in not a single positive test for Covid; quite a feat for the City of Oxford, which was one of the most virulent hotspots in England during the summer of 2021.

England relaxed its pandemic rules at the beginning of week 2 of the program, allowing seminarians to venture out of the City of Oxford for our traditional field trips to London (week 2), Bath (week 3), and Blenheim (week 5). During reading week, seminarians were allowed to travel within the confines of the United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland for quarantine purposes). Scotland, Wales, and London proved to be the most popular destinations amongst our seminarians. The only Covid incident to affect the program was a positive test amongst the Trinity College kitchen staff during week 5 that caused the dining hall to close from Thursday afternoon to Monday morning. This resulted in a more rustic feel to the Thursday evening High Table dinner that was served under the marquee in the Garden Quadrangle to the great pleasure of a majority of seminarians, and also forcing us to replace the traditional Sunday BBQ by a pizza party, once again to the delight of most seminarians and staff members.

The number of course offerings were reduced due to the smaller number of seminarians (five courses instead of 10). Due to the quarantine, the first week of courses was conducted remotely. The courses, British Perspectives on the American Revolution, taught by Andrew Beaumont, PhD, and Oxford, The City as a Work of Art tutored by Beverley Kyle, PhD, proved to be the most popular of the program. The seminarians were also treated to four lectures under the auspices of the British Studies Colloquium on several topics ranging from Mrs. Dalloway’s London to the contextualization of decolonization efforts at Oxford University, all related to the colloquium’s theme “Presences of the Empire.” These lectures were delivered in the state-of-the-art temporary classroom found on the grounds of the Trinity’s garden, featuring air conditioning (a rare occurrence in Oxford), used during the construction of the brand new Levine building that should be ready to welcome its first students in the spring of 2022.

The 2021 Oxford Seminar proved to be a great success, and a testament to the resilience of our seminarians. This sure bodes well for the future of the UMass Oxford Summer Seminar that should enter its 55th iteration in the summer of 2022 strong of its experience through the pandemic and fully vaccinated!

—Philippe Baillargeon, Director, UMass Oxford Summer Seminar

PWTC JOB PLACEMENTS – CLASS OF 2021

Sohini Banerjee, intern, Amazon
Stephanie Bergmann, UMass International Programs Office
Trevor Branch, marketing writer, Dimensional Insight
Bianca Capriottii, business analyst consultant, CGI
Cameron Gibney, SEO specialist, Boston Web Marketing
Kirsten Diefenbach, technical writer, Dimensional Insight
Sarah Graham, technical writer, Tamr
Brigid Herr, intern, Indigo
Sophia Hültman, technical writer, Brooks Automation
Benjamin LaGasse, intern, Brooks Automation
Laura O’Malley, program assistant, Association for Environmental Health and Sciences Foundation
Chris Mallon, technical writer, MATC Group
Grace O’Neil, UX intern, SimSpace
Emma Ryan, technical writer, Karen Clark and Company
Chris Tamilio-Awed, technical writer, Oracle

—Daniel Sack, Program Advisor, Live Performance: International Theatre Festival Immersion

Oxford in the Time of the Pandemic.”

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17
than a century ago, what were U.S. authors doing?

Randall Knoper, *Literary Neurophysiology: Memory, Race, Sex, and Representation in U.S. Writing, 1860-1914*. Writing about the brain and the nervous system more than a century ago, what were U.S. authors doing? Literary Neurophysiology: Memory, Race, Sex, and Representation in U.S. Writing, 1860-1914 examines their use of literature to experiment with the new materialist psychology, a science that was challenging their capacity to represent reality and forging new understandings of race and sexuality.


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