

The English Channel

The Department of English

@ Oakland University

Rochester, MI

November 2013

Approach of Winter

The half-stripped trees
struck by a wind together,
bending all,
the leaves flutter drily
and refuse to let go
or driven like hail
stream bitterly out to one side
and fall
where the salvias, hard carmine,—
like no leaf that ever was—
edge the bare garden.

William Carlos Williams



From the Chair

As some of you know, I've been blogging on occasion at my website kathywrites.com and many of my posts are inspired and influenced by my work in the classroom. I'm always looking for ways to make connections between the books I read, the work I teach, and the writing life. This month, I'd like to share one of my recent posts with you, in the hopes that it might inspire you to think in new ways about literature, the life of the mind, and why it matters.

On Thinking

Not too long ago, a well-meaning friend – I presume this was well meaning, anyway – suggested that I have a habit of overthinking things.

I've thought a lot about this.

I think – what does that even mean? Thinking is not like eating, like there's a finite space in my brain and the thoughts will hurl out if I stuff too many in, the projectile spewing of a glutton with no self control. I think – what would be the limit, then? What's the right amount of thinking, and how do you know when you get to too much, and where's the rule book, and what's the danger of too much, what's the punishment, what's my penance? I think – I certainly hope this was a well-meaning observation, or maybe we can't be friends any more.

Thought is my home. All of my favorite poems dwell in the mind. Once, in a bad time, reading Edgar Bowers saved my life: "The mind will change," he writes, in *Amor Vincit Omnia*, "and change shall be relief." I thought about this line for a long time, and my mind did change. And it was true, the change was a relief. Thought is the one true comfort of my life, always present, a far more faithful companion than any person has been. "The mind is a hotel with a thousand rooms," Linh Dinh tells us. "When I tilt my head a certain way, I think about certain things." Thinking is what keeps me together, keeps me alive, makes me want to get out of bed in the morning. How could anyone ever get too much of that?

Wallace Stevens understands this: "It can never be satisfied, the mind, never."



Kathleen Pfeiffer, Chair
Department of English



The English Channel

Mentoring Our Majors by Professor Annie Gilson



Senior English Majors and Oakland alums, consider participating in the OU-English Alumni Mentoring Program

We pair OU English seniors with working OU English graduates to help students make the transition from school to career. Currently-employed grads who loved being English majors at OU now want to help students. Mentors miss university life and want to give back to the Department of English by becoming mentors to current students.

Having a mentor is a great way to start your job search. Mentors can tell you how they went about getting jobs and developing successful careers. They can also tell you how job searches are currently being conducted, and give you insight into selecting areas for your search, networking, doing interviews, etc. There are many ways to communicate with your mentor: some pairs talk via email or Facebook, others meet for coffee. You and your mentor decide how you'll communicate.

Plus there's a party! Every semester (in November and April) the English Department hosts a mixer for alums and students who have been involved in this program. It's a great way to network with other mentors who are helping other students. We have mentors who graduated 30 years ago, and mentors who graduated only last year. Last year's graduates were students being mentored in this program themselves. Now they have become mentors because the experience was so helpful and fun.

If you are interested in having a mentor or becoming one, please email Professor Annie Gilson gilson@oakland.edu and let her know what kinds of careers you're interested in. She will pair you up with a mentor whose interests match up with yours.



Editor's Note: The following page is an advertisement for the program. Please feel free to print and distribute copies.

ATTENTION SENIORS!

INTERESTED IN GETTING SOME GUIDANCE
ON THE JOB SEARCH?

Apply to the

OU English Majors Alumni Mentoring Program

We pair **OU English seniors**
with working **OU English graduates**
to help you make the transition from school to career!

Who they are:

Currently-employed grads who loved being English majors at OU now want to **help you**. They miss university life and want to give back to OU English by becoming **mentors to current students**.

Why it helps:

Having a mentor is a great way to start your job search. Your mentor can tell you how they went about getting jobs and developing a successful career. They can also tell you how job searches are currently being conducted, and give you an insight into how to prepare yourself for selecting areas for your search, networking, doing interviews, etc.

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In-person networking opportunity:

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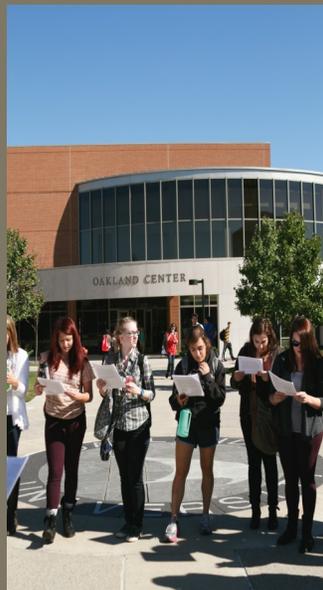
In Public



War of the Words

Believing that poetry deserves to be heard, Professor Rob Anderson and Professor Jeff Insko led students in a lyrical Revolutionary War, with British Poetry facing off against American Poetry.

Check out the [article](#) in the Oakland Post online.





Congratulations to Dr. Kevin Laam, whose recent publication "Andrew Marvell's Ovidian Consolations" appears in the highly esteemed *Studies in Philology*. Read the article at . . .

[More](#)

Professor Jeff Insko has been named the winner of the Wilson Book Award. This highly competitive award honors excellence in faculty writing and Jeff's submission was "Passing Current: Electricity, Magnetism, and Historical Transmission in *The Linwoods*." It was published in *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, and was the committee's unanimous top choice.



Jeff Insko (left) and Dean Corcoran, CAS

At the recent International Conference on Romanticism held at Oakland, several of our students both present and former did us proud. Shannon Cooley, Nate Rieber, Jason Storms, and Allison Bohn all presented papers. Nate was so good he had faculty asking him about the professors who had trained him so well. Dawn Kaczmar gave a very impressive paper and was equally outstanding in the Q&A. Her answers revealed a real command of the field.

Former student Chris Thomas, now at IU, gave a great paper and fielded all the questions at his panel wonderfully.

Several students, both graduate and undergraduate, generously donated their time at the registration table for the conference. In the words of Jeff Insko "It takes a village to raise an academic conference."

Don't miss the profile of our very own Professor Annie Gilson on the College of Arts and Sciences home page. It follows closely on the heels of a profile of Special Lecturer Justin Remeselnik, another outstanding member of the English faculty. Just click on the pictures to link to the articles.



Grizzdance Film Festival

Along with many other exciting events, screenwriter Barry Levy will be at the festival this year discussing his film *Vantage Point*. For complete information go to the Grizzdance [website](#) or the Oakland events [calendar](#). In addition, he will deliver the keynote address at the awards banquet this year and meet with our Creative Writing and Cinema Studies majors.

Shakespeare on Film

The term “unique” gets used a lot these days, but these events definitely deserve that accolade. The films *Shakespeare Behind Bars* and *Mickey B* might forever change how you think about Shakespeare in performance. For dates and location, along with more details, scroll down to see the advertisement on the following page.

Secret Cinema

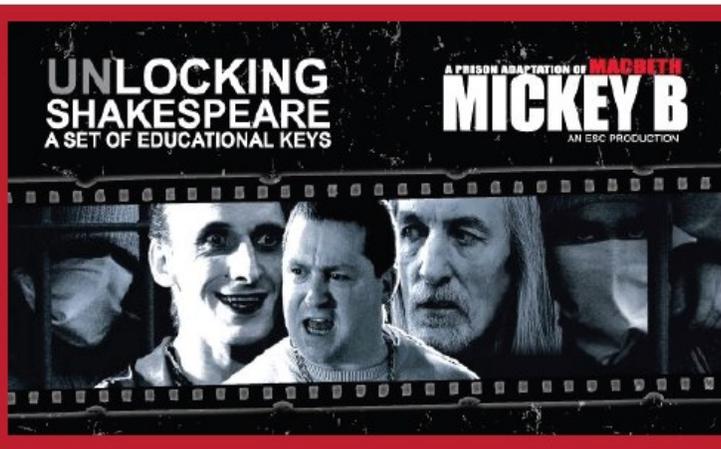
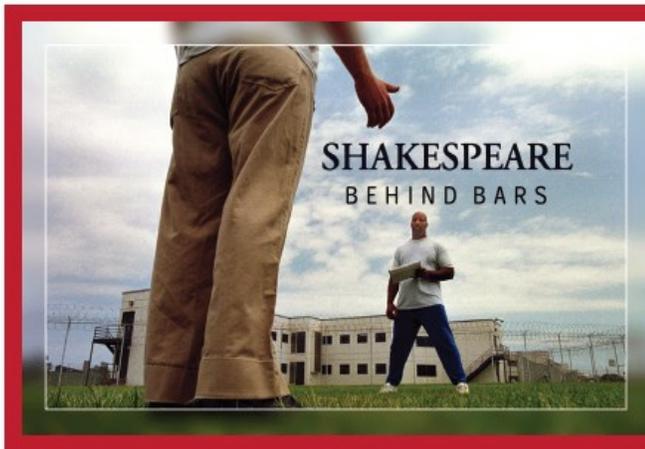
This hugely popular event offers you the chance to see notable films selected and presented by the Cinema Studies faculty. The title is a secret, so when the lights go down viewers get to share in the experience of discovering something totally unexpected. The series is in two parts: Old Hollywood and New Hollywood, on the first and third Thursdays of the month, utilizing the pivotal year of 1967 as a historical dividing line.

Previous selections have included *Vertigo*, *The Apartment*, *Before Sunrise*, *Bringing Up Baby*, and *Saturday Night Fever*. For more information, check out this link to [Maple Theater](#) and watch for upcoming announcements in The English Channel.

The next showings are **November 21 and December 5**. If you are still on the fence about this, then I have two words for you—*free popcorn!*



Oakland University Presents:
FILMING SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS



SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS

Monday, Nov. 25, 2013

5:30 pm

Oakland Center, Gold Rooms

An unexpectedly delightful documentary that follows the casting, rehearsal, and presentation of Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, by convicted felons inside Kentucky's Luther Lockett Correctional Complex. Winner of eight film festival awards, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* smashes many of our long held notions about prisoners and criminals as we watch these remarkably unique actors prepare. In the process, we accompany them as they discover the power of truth, forgiveness and transformation.

MICKEY B

Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2013

5:30 pm

Oakland Center, Oakland Room

"A world first, a feature film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, made with serving prisoners as cast, in Northern Ireland's notorious maximum security prison, HMP Maghaberry...Shot in hand held close up with cold, razor-blue filters, an unrelenting claustrophobic intimacy draws us into this dark world of ashen, scarred faces and tattooed flesh. . . . This is a Macbeth like no other." -
(British Council)

"Marvel at the transformative power of art. Find freedom in performance and release in words." - **Jeannette Catsoulis, The New York Times**

"Profoundly moving. Any minute of this documentary packs more punch than the entirety of most triumph-of-the-human-spirit blockbuster." - **Jan Stuart, Newsday**

Sponsored by:
The College of Arts & Sciences
The Judd Family Endowment
OU Department of English

**** Please join Theatre Directors Curt Tofteland, Tom Magill, and OU Professor, Niels Herold for riveting "talkbacks" immediately following each screening.**

For further information:
OU Department of English
Phone: 248-370-2250
Email: herold@oakland.edu

November is AUFD month at Oakland, and the English Department has always answered the call in admirable fashion. If you have ever wondered why this drive receives so much emphasis, take a minute and read the following email message from Professor Jeff Chapman, this year's coordinator for our department.

I have taken over the reins of the English Department All-University Fund Drive from the estimable Bailey McDaniel. While I doubt I will be nearly as good at drumming up support as Bailey, I hope our department can keep up its tradition of vigorous participation in the AUFD. And yes, I have now used reins and drums as metaphors: I blame any martial metaphors on having just taught *The Iliad*.

By now you will have found the flyers for the AUFD I put in your boxes. I hope you will glance through that for some information on the fund drive. You can also find out more information about the fund drive at : <http://www.oakland.edu/aufd>.

As in the past, we have two goals when it comes to the AUFD: 1) we want to raise funds for the university and the department, and 2) we want to get maximum participation from our department. The second goal is what I want to push here. How great would it be if we could have 100% English Department participation. We all know that English is the best department at OU ... let's continue to demonstrate that to the rest of the university. Bailey said this in years past, but I want to reiterate it here: when it comes to participation rates, it doesn't matter if you donate \$5 or \$1000. And I *know* that we can all afford \$5.

To contribute now, just [click on this link](#). It's *that easy*.

In case you need extra incentive, the interim president will continue the tradition of matching any contribution you make, 50¢ on the dollar. This isn't a first-come, first-served situation. If you contribute \$500, Interim President Youngblood will match it with \$250. And if you are contributing to the English Department funds, that's a huge extra investment that comes our way.

Remember that you can designate your contribution toward several different meaningful funds:

English Gift Fund (37519)

English Student Enrichment Fund (37510)

Jenna Elyse Balabuch Study Abroad Awards (68739)

Cheryl Cole Pope Scholarship Fund for MA in English students (31106)

There are many other funds that are worth contributing to as well. You can find the full list [here](#).

Let's demonstrate our commitment to OU and our department. Like I said, it would be amazing if we could get 100% department participation, so even if you can't give any more, let's all give at least \$5-10 and more if you can. Your contributions will enrich the department for years to come.

Thank you for your passion,

Jeff Chapman

For those who wish to contribute to the English Department apart from the AUFD, you can always do so at any time. See the following form for details.

The Department of English depends on the continuing contributions and support of our alumni and friends to fund special student events such as lectures and readings, to support student research and travel, and to purchase special video and book materials for classroom use. We ask you to please consider making a contribution (which is tax deductible and doubly deductible for Michigan residents).

Thank you for your generosity!

Contributions may be made by mail using the form below or online by clicking [here](#). Be sure to designate your gift to the English department.

Make checks payable to Oakland University with the **English Department specified on the memo line of the check** and mail to:

Professor Kathleen Pfeiffer, Chair
Department of English
Oakland University
Rochester, MI 48309-4401

Please accept my gift to support special events, student research, classroom materials, and this newsletter.

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$75 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ Other _____

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Thank you for your support!



The Back Page

“What Can You Do With An English Major?”

Whether you are a faculty member, current student, or a former student you’ve probably been confronted with that question. And, if you have been around here for a while, you will probably agree with me that we didn’t always handle that question very well. A desire to actually *use* your degree in a professional capacity other than teaching seemed, well, just a bit too mercenary for the ideal English major.

Times have changed.

Indeed, in our last issue the chairman of our department, Professor Kathleen Pfeiffer, wrote about that change. Above all, we are learning that professional goals need not be antithetical to the traditional ideals and values we hope our majors take with them.

In addition, I think there is an increased sensitivity to the fact our majors work extremely hard and pay a lot of money to achieve the distinction of graduating with a degree that many are telling them is of little value in the marketplace of jobs. They deserve better. They deserve to know that the love of literature, film, and writing that we have both fostered and nurtured over the course of their years at Oakland will also provide them with a fulfilling career in which those interests can continue to grow.

Lastly, the dedication, sacrifice, and creativity of the English Department faculty continue to be demonstrated in programs and events designed to bring our students into contact with the world outside of Oakland.

Last week I heard about interns from our Creative Writing program working with the communities of both the Baldwin Center and Common Ground. This month you can watch films about the value of Shakespeare in prisons. Diverse workshops on professionalism *and careers are now the norm rather than the rare exception.

The places a degree in English can take you seem limited only by imagination, creativity, enthusiastic application of skills and, most of all, an awareness of self and an understanding of the world around you. No surprise that these have always been what we have taught, and continue to teach, every day.

J. McClure

*Watch for an upcoming article on the Cinema Studies Professionalization Workshop in our December issue .



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<http://www.oakland.edu/english/>

