

Postings

Musings and goings-on from the Department of English & Philosophy

Book Launches Celebrate Scholarly Accomplishments

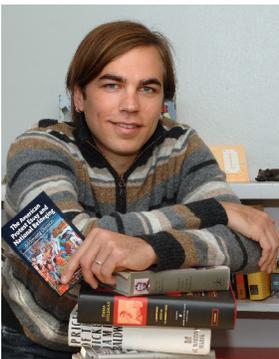
In the late afternoon of Monday, July 16, ISU faculty and community members gathered at Old Town Pocatello's Piccolo Gallery to celebrate the publication of **Jennifer Eastman Attebery's** third book, *Up in the Rocky Mountains: Writing the Swedish Immigrant Experience* from the University of Minnesota Press.

By 1920, one-fifth of all Swedish immigrants were living in the American West, and Professor Attebery uses a folklorist approach to investigate their experiences and their impact on communities in Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Considering more than 300 letters, Attebery analyzes their storytelling, repetitive language, traditional phrasing, and metaphoric images. This innovative approach recognizes the letters' power as a folk-form and reveals how the immigrants themselves evaluated their contributions to the growing mountain communities.



Attebery

During the book launch, Attebery described the scope of her project. As part of her presentation, we heard wonderful excerpts from the letters read aloud both in Swedish and in English by Karen and John Knox. Attebery's fine new book and the many other recent publications by faculty in ISU's College of Arts and Sciences are testaments to the strength and vibrancy of humanities research at the College. The standing-room-only crowd at the Piccolo Gallery was testament to the eager audience for such scholarship.



Norman

On Monday, November 5, **Brian Norman** was feted by his colleagues and friends in the Pocatello and ISU communities at a book launch to celebrate the publication of his new book, *The American Protest Essay and National Belonging: Addressing Division*. The event, which took place at the Piccolo Gallery in Old Town, was the second book launch for ISU English faculty in less than six months.

Special items of interest and stories contained inside

- Faculty & Graduate Student News
- Alumni Spotlight
- Undergraduate Departmental Awards

Postings contains notes and updates that reflect the activities of the department. It also provides information about upcoming activities and other items of interest.



Norman

Norman's book uncovers a rich tradition of essays by writers who also serve as spokespersons of American social movements throughout the nation's history. In doing so, he demonstrates that the American protest essay is a distinct form that draws from both the European-born personal essay and American political oratory anchored in social movements. At the celebration, Claudia McCoy, assistant director of women's studies, and Susan Goslee read passages from the book, Norman talked about his work, and Laura Woodworth-Ney, history department chair, and Brian Attebery toasted his accomplishment. Following the toast, Norman signed books and chatted with the crowd.

"I am so grateful for the English-major experience because it allows me to wear many hats. I can be an historian one day, and an amateur psychoanalyst the next. The best part is that I can explore all these different 'vocations' while I'm reveling in my love of literature and learning how to communicate effectively."

-Devori Kimbro, graduate student

Alan Johnson has been invited to present a paper at the "Researching Anglo-India" conference in Kolkata, India, in December. This draws on his research trip to India during his sabbatical last term.

Three of his poems are appearing in *Kavya Bharati*, a national poetry journal in English published in southern India by the American College, Madurai.

Faculty News



Goslee

Susan Goslee started this fall as an assistant professor of English and creative writing. She received her M.F.A. from the University of Alabama and her Ph.D. in literature and creative writing from the University of Utah. Her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner*, *Indiana Review*, *Third Coast*, *Hayden's Ferry*, and *Spork*.

Susan Swetnam has given several presentations this fall. In September, she presented "Saints as Mentors for Teachers" at the Diocese of Boise Fall Conference in Boise, Idaho. And, in October, she signed her new book *My Best Teachers Were Saints* at Barnes and Noble in Idaho Falls. She also gave the keynote speech, "What 21st Century Librarians Can Learn from Turn-of-the-Twentieth Century Carnegie Library Establishment," at the annual meeting of the Idaho Library Association. At the Induction Celebration for the University of Oregon School of Journalism Hall of Achievement, she gave a talk on Grace Jordan.

In November, Swetnam will present "Two Lesser-Known Benedictine Saints: Lioba and Lutegard" at the Benedictine Saints Conference, held at the Monastery of the Ascension in Jerome and "How Monastery Food Reflects Evolutions in Women's Monastic Culture" at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood.

Hal Hellwig presented “Mark Twain’s Travel in the Cities of the World” at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association conference in November in Atlanta. The paper is an analysis of Twain’s tour through a number of cities that he describes in *Following the Equator*. This will be a shortened form of a chapter from one of his next books, perspectives from a number of authors on traveling to cities (which will include Wordsworth, Hawthorne, Dickens, Twain, Hemingway, and probably a few others).

He is also sending out a book proposal to a number of university presses on the development of Faulknerian influences in film noir and television shows (such as *Perry Mason*, *Have Gun, Will Travel*, *Rockford Files*, *Frasier* and *Monk*).

His book on Twain’s travel works is in the production phase at McFarland Press. The book can be pre-ordered at Amazon.com, with an estimated publication date of June 15, 2008. Hellwig is also developing a book proposal for an edition of *Following the Equator*.

Nancy D. Wall has had a paper accepted for presentation at the 6th annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities in Honolulu in January 2008. Her paper is titled “Is There a Place for Dr. Seuss and Shel Silverstein in the ESL Classroom?”

Jennifer Adkison and M.A. student **Amy Brumfield** gave a co-presentation at the Western Literature Association conference in Tacoma, Washington, in October. In her talk “Recovering and Reading Women’s Stories: Teaching Archival Research,” Adkison discussed a class she taught this past summer in which students utilized the ISU Special Collections in their individual projects on textual editing. Brumfield presented “Such Was My Fate,” a project she began in Adkison’s class. In this project, Brumfield transcribes portions of the manuscript of a nineteenth-century Idaho woman and discusses it as a literary document.

Folklore Program Offered

The anthropology and English departments have joined forces to institute a cooperative Folklore Program offering a minor in folklore available to majors in American Studies, Anthropology, English, History, Sociology, and other fields closely related to folklore. Course work for the minor taught in Anthropology will include Shoshoni folklore, American Indian verbal arts, ethnography, and material culture. Course work taught in English will include folklore and literature, folklore genres, and the introductory course, ANTH/ENGL212, which will be required for the minor. Inquiries about the new program may be made to the program director Jennifer Eastman Attebery, Professor of English.



Bill McCurdy, **Alan Johnson**, and **Terry Engebretsen** staff the English and Philosophy table at the celebration following President Arthur C. Vailas’ investiture on September 14. President Vailas was officially invested into office as the university’s 12th president. Following the ceremony, the ISU community convened upon the Quad for a barbecue, entertainment, and displays by various departments and colleges.

Alumni Spotlight on Clark Draney

Clark Draney is an assistant professor at the College of Southern Idaho. He lives with his spouse, Keri, and their five children in Twin Falls. He received his D.A. in English in 2004 from ISU. Clark is active on Faculty Senate at CSI and is also working with the school district's Gifted and Talented Coordinator to Implement collaborative online projects for GT classes. He took time out of his busy schedule to answer a few questions . . .



Clark Draney is pictured here with his youngest son, Colton

“One of the things I find most enjoyable about what I do is the one-on-one interaction with students. Because I was mentored so consistently and so well as a graduate student, I have a deeper appreciation for and interest in mentoring students appropriately.”

Q: Tell us a little bit about your current position. Is it what you expected to be doing when you finished your degree? Are there unexpected elements in what you're doing?

A: My current position is assistant professor of English in the Department of English, Languages, and Philosophy at the College of Southern Idaho. Our department has 16 full-time faculty. We teach several sections of FYC and literature (5/5 load). I'm currently teaching 101 & 102 and Survey of World Mythology and Survey of British Literature I. In recent semesters, I've also taught Survey of American Literature II, Introduction to Literature, Intermediate Composition, Introduction to Literary Criticism, and Basic Composition. In other words, I teach the gamut of courses offered by CSI. In fact, the fact that I've been called upon to teach courses not strictly in my areas of expertise is one of the surprising and wonderful aspects of this job. I chose CSI over other offers I'd received because of the opportunities I saw here to teach in both my areas of expertise—composition and American Literature. The other job offers I entertained would have had me teaching primarily composition. Though I love teaching comp, I'm delighted to be teaching literature as well, and I'm delighted to be teaching in areas that stretch my skills and add to the body of works I've read.

ISU's D.A. program prepared me exceptionally well to teach at the community college level. I'm very comfortable working in every teaching area, and I have the background to build courses even in areas I did not particularly focus on in my coursework. The interdisciplinary nature of the D.A. lends itself very well to teaching American Lit one semester, World Mythology another, and British Lit another.

Q: What were the most important things you learned in the program here that you draw on in the work you do now?

A: I suppose the most important things I learned at ISU would have to include the strong theoretical foundation for the teaching of comp and lit, and the strong appreciation for Idaho and her students. One of the things I find most enjoyable about what I do is the one-on-one interaction with students. Because I was mentored so consistently and so well as a graduate student, I have a deeper appreciation for and interest in mentoring students appropriately. CSI's student population includes students with a wide range of preparation for college and, therefore, requires quite a bit more attention to mentoring than I was used to in my previous teaching experience. But because I had excellent mentors like Steve Adkison, Keith Comer, and John Kijinski (and I really shouldn't start naming

names because I will inevitably leave out other excellent mentors, like Tom Klein, Terry Engebretsen, Brian Attebery, Curt Whitaker, and Susan Swetnam, not to mention Alan Johnson, Hal Hellwig, and Sonja Launspach) I know a little bit (and I'm learning more) about how to encourage and motivate students.

In terms of theoretical and textual preparation, I regularly find myself drawing upon coursework and course projects completed at ISU for ideas about teaching and departmental & college-level service. I feel as well prepared professionally and academically as anyone in my department or, indeed, at the college.

Q: If you could go back to your graduate school experience, would you do anything differently? Why or why not?

A: I don't think I would change a thing about my graduate school experiences because to do so might have caused me to miss out on the relationships with wonderful faculty members and fellow students. I was fortunate to be well advised throughout my doctoral program, and moved through in a timely fashion with a minimum of delays. That timely progress was pretty important for my family situation, but I also found myself learning to use my time exceptionally well. Having courses so intensely piled on one another served to help me see connections between texts, discourses, and disciplines that I probably wouldn't have seen if I had been moving at a more leisurely pace. That effect was multiplied by the interdisciplinary expectations of the degree and is a welcome and satisfying component of my teaching and scholarship today.

It was crazy, in some ways, to cram everything in to three short years, but the experience served to give me a great deal of confidence in my ability to handle scholarship and teaching at every level. (And I learned that eventually Steve would get tired of my asking if I should read "one more thing" for the thesis, and that "Just write the thing!" is pretty good motivation for getting words on the page.)

Q: What advice would you offer current graduate students in our program?

A: "Just write the thing!" No—seriously—that's a pretty important piece of advice. Really.

My sense of graduate studies in the humanities is an overall lack of self-confidence in students. For whatever reason, the constructed, and therefore relative, nature of some of the work we do seems to lead to a sense of what?—fear? worry? anxiety?—which undercuts students' ability to get the work done. Find an idea you have some passion for and go to work. Stop worrying about whether or not it is the Great American Novel or the Great American Critical Piece. Make your splash in the world by speaking up, putting your head down (to get the work done), and standing up for the particular pedagogy and passion you believe in.

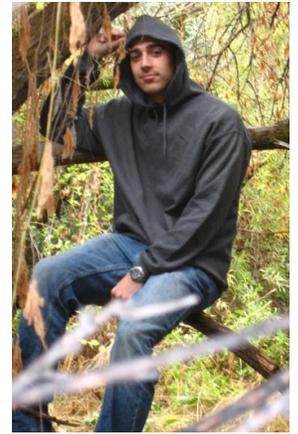
Oh, and start early to work on your theses or D.A. papers. Find an idea early in your grad career and work on it in every class you take. Not every course will relate directly to what you are trying to do (and some instructors may not take kindly the subversion of their courses to your purposes), but if every term paper or research project has shades of your thesis in it, you'll find yourself with plenty of material to work with when the paper or thesis is front and center and the deadline is approaching. So, just write the well, you get the idea.

'Make your splash in the world by speaking up, putting your head down (to get the work done), and standing up for the particular pedagogy and passion you believe in.'

Interview conducted by Jennifer Adkison

Undergraduates Honored with Departmental Awards

Colin Meldrum, a native of Pocatello, won the Agnes Just Reid Scholarship in Creative Writing, worth \$850, for the 2007 fall semester. Colin is a senior English major and Spanish minor, and he coordinates the Creative Writing group, an offshoot of the undergraduate Literary Association. He won the award based on a collection of poems and short stories including “The Flight,” “Clam,” and “his Lock and I” as well as a composite memoir titled “Octopus Ballet.” He is currently exploring variations on identity, truth, and experience in a novel-length, independent short story sequence for his senior creative writing project. He writes, “Writing for me has become more than storytelling. It has become an intellectual pursuit, and an exploration of language and human thought and experience.”



Colin Meldrum

Martin Vest, an English major raised in Idaho and Tennessee, won the Charles Kegel Scholarship in English Studies, worth nearly \$1800, this fall. Martin is a sophomore who has returned to college after a 15-year hiatus in which, among other pursuits, he labored as a poet.



Martin Vest

He won the Kegel Scholarship on the basis of two submitted essays, “A Cabbage Among Roses: Encyclopedia Britannica vs. Wikipedia” and “Swimming the Irrational: Does Science Threaten Faith.” Martin writes, “My passion is with poetry. Currently, I spend most of my time and energy trying to understand this new beast—academic writing. I’m having a great time, and I really appreciate the warm reception and helpful advice that I’ve received from everyone in the

English department. Receiving the Kegel Scholarship is an honor.”

English Graduate Student Association News

EGSA won third place and a small cash prize in the **Student Organization Fair’s** booth design competition on September 12. The theme for the event was “James Bond,” and, in true English major fashion, puns were the name of the game at the EGSA/Literary Association booth. Representatives included “James Frond” and “James’s Blondes.”

EGSA hosted a **Brown Bag Luncheon** featuring Brian Norman on October 4. Norman spoke to the assembled students about how best to foster a research project from conception to fruition.

EGSA is planning a **Winter Break Party/Mini-Reading** for Friday, December 14. The reading room (LA 244) will be stocked with holiday treats and refreshments beginning at noon. In addition to the treats, students will be conducting a mini-marathon reading of Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* in the hallway directly in front of the English office. Everyone is welcome to participate in the reading. If you would prefer not to read, please stop by and enjoy the festive atmosphere!



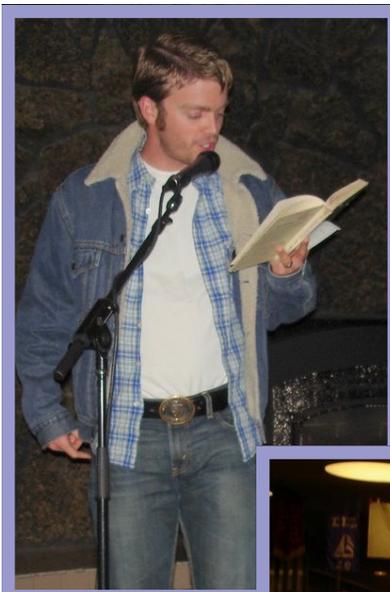
Monty Vierra, Bao Guo Zhang, and Kelly Moor at the Student Organization Fair

Graduate Student News

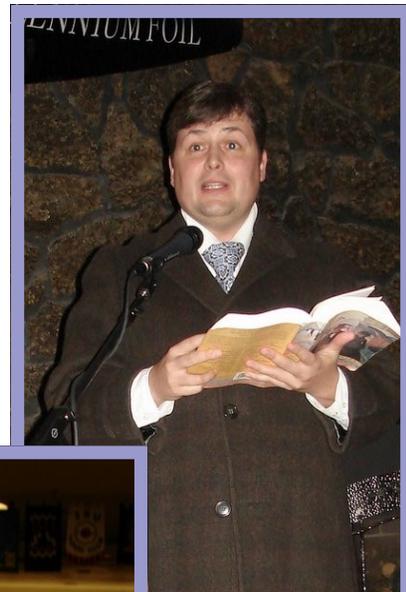
Glenda Funk participated in the first Thesis-in-Progress workshop of the semester on October 5. A sample of her project, which examines structure in Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi*, was presented to a group of graduate students and department faculty members, and was followed by a lively conversation. All students are encouraged to attend these developmental workshops.



Brian Attebery and Glenda Funk at the Thesis-in-Progress Workshop



Mike Stubbs as Jack Kerouac



Matt English as Baudelaire



Syndie Allen as the Grimm Brothers' Gretel and Rick Fowler as Truman Capote

Dead Writers' Night Scares Up Fun

On Saturday, October 27, **EGSA's** annual Dead Writers' Night commenced at 7 p.m. in the Pond Student Union Building. Hot chocolate and apple cider flowed while a variety of folks read aloud from short stories, novels, poetry, and plays. This year, Emily Dickinson, Charles Baudelaire, Jack Kerouac, Sylvia Plath and more all made appearances. Grimm Brothers' "Gretel" conversed with Truman Capote and was relieved when the rogue zombie came to read from *The Jew of Malta* rather than to munch on brains. Proceeds from the event will go to funding for the Intermountain Graduate Conference in the spring.

Over the years, friends and alumni of the department have been charitable with their contributions, and we sincerely appreciate their generosity. These contributions have allowed us to bring guest speakers and artists to campus, provide match funding for much needed technology and system upgrades, assist with funding the literary magazine *Black Rock & Sage*, and offer more scholarship opportunities. If you are interested in contributing to the department, please contact Terry Engebretsen, chair, engeterr@isu.edu or call the department office at (208) 282-2478.

Special Events



CONGRATULATIONS!

In a small ceremony on August 12 in Estes Park, CO, Bethany Schultz married Adam Hurst, a Pocatello resident. The couple honeymooned in Cozumel and narrowly avoided Hurricane Dean.

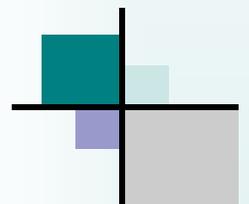


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