



English Matters

The semester is almost over, yet there's still so much to do! While you're busy reading your way through your syllabi and working on those term papers, here at *English Matters* we're trying to keep our eye on the big picture.

For your friendly neighborhood English faculty, that means taking stock of what we've accomplished this year, and what we're setting our sights on for 2011-12. It has been an especially busy and productive year for us, and we can't resist passing along word about our colleagues' amazing accomplishments. You know, in addition to the amazing work they do in the classroom. You may not know that teaching is one-third of our job—many of us would say the **best** one-third—but we're also expected to pursue our research by writing books and articles and to pitch in at the college and in the CUNY system as part of our commitment to professional service. See below for a roundup of awards, fellowships and distinctions that would make any department proud. We are, and you should be too.

But enough about your professors—soon enough the spotlight will be back on you, dear students. As you'll see in the Department News section, the month of May is chock full of English Major events intended to show off our amazingly accomplished students. The May 11 research showcase, the May 18 "Experience Swap" and especially the May 20 Awards luncheon are all coming up, and they will be starring some of our truly outstanding graduating seniors. Why don't you plan on coming out to one or all of these events? You can join in the standing ovation, but better still if you joined in the conversation about what it takes to make the John Jay English major work for you.

So read on! And enjoy!

Department News

Senior Research Showcase!

- As part of the college's Student Research Week, the three students pursuing Honors in English will present their research-in-progress on their Honors theses. **Rashida Davis** will be discussing her project, whose title is taken from a quotation by Nasir Jones: "We in chronic need of a second look at the law books, and the whole race dichotomy." **Jayelle Dorsainville** will be speaking about her thesis, "Chasing Pavement: Post-Colonial Women," as will **Christopher McConnell**, who is working on "Post-Colonial Literature: Difference and Disjuncture." Come support these exceptional students and learn what pursuing an Honors degree is all about: Wednesday, May 11 at 3:30 in Room 610T.

Are You Experienced?

- Want to find out what it really takes to survive and thrive as an English major? The first annual English Major Experience Swap will be held on Wednesday, May 18, 3:30-5:30pm in the English Department Conference room. Graduating seniors **Jayelle Dorsainville**, **Clyde Marin**, and **Stefan Seecharran** will be on hand to talk about their own journeys and what you can learn from their successes—and their mistakes. Among other topics, they'll be talking about the courses that changed their lives and the courses they wish they had taken, how they discovered good writing, how they learned to balance their academic and personal lives, and the perils of taking too many lit courses in a semester. Now, don't you want to hear what they have to say?

Still Time to Apply!

- The deadline for applications for both sessions of John Jay's Pre-Law Boot Camp is now May 23. If you're thinking about law school, these free, intensive one-week programs (5/31-6/3 for freshmen, sophomores and transfers; 6/6-6/9 for juniors and seniors) can help you hone the necessary skills to get into law school, as well as demystify the application process. Full details at <http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/centersinstitutes/prelaw/bootcamp.asp>.

Save the Date!

- Remember that the annual English Major Awards Luncheon is planned for Friday, May 20. Mark your calendars for this splendid year-end event, where we recognize student excellence in the classroom and celebrate our booming major program.

Faculty Awards

In this issue of *English Matters* we wanted to take a moment to say a few words about the extraordinary success our faculty have had this year. So without further ado, here's an admittedly incomplete list of your professors' achievements and accomplishments, which is loosely broken down into three categories.

John Jay College Distinctions

Following on the success of his Pulitzer prize-winning biography, *Eden's Outcasts: The Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Father* (2008), **John Matteson** received the John Jay Alumni Distinguished Faculty Award this year. He was also invited to deliver more than a dozen invited lectures, talks, readings and panel discussions to academic and cultural organizations this past year, including the Keynote address at the second biennial Literature and Law Conference held here at John Jay this past April.

For the second year in a row, **Nivedita Majumdar** has won the John Jay Faculty Scholarly Excellence Award for exceptional scholarly productivity in the past three years and promise for the future. This competitive internal research award, one of six bestowed across the entire college, comes with two course releases. She recently completed a book manuscript, *The Nation and Its Discontents: Critiques of Nationalism in South Asian Literature* and is working on a new book project, *Partitioned Communities: Religion and Secularism in India*.

Kim Helmer received a John Jay Distinguished Teaching Award this year, one of three awarded across the college. The prize, which comes with a cash award, recognizes Professor Helmer for her dedication to the scholarship of teaching and her innovative use of technology. She is also the recipient of a PSC-CUNY award to support work on her book project, "The Downtown School: An Ethnographic Study of Spanish Heritage-language Learners in a Borderlands Charter High School." The PSC-CUNY grant will fund one course release.

Toy-Fung Tung won a John Jay Outstanding Scholarly Mentor Award, which is accompanied by a cash prize. She also won a University Faculty Fellowship Publications Program award, which gave her 3 hours of reassigned time this semester to help advance her research as well as to participate in an interdisciplinary seminar that draws faculty from across the CUNY system.

CUNY-Wide Fellowships and Awards

Helen Kapstein received a Mid-Career Faculty Fellowship which involves 4 course releases and participation in a year-long seminar at the Graduate Center. The fellowship, funded through the Andrew Mellon Foundation, is offered through The Committee on Globalization and Social Change, which has selected "solidarity" as the theme for this year's seminar. Additionally, Prof. Kapstein won a PSC-CUNY research foundation award that will fund an additional course release to assist her work on a project about mass hysteria and the postcolonial nation.

Likewise, **Paul Narkunas** won an award from the Center for Humanities at the CUNY Graduate Center to participate in a seminar devoted to "Freedom" funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation. It's for a project entitled: "The Ahuman: Rethinking Human Life in the Wake of Biotechnology and Neoliberalism." The award, which comes with released time from teaching, entails meeting weekly in a general seminar of interdisciplinary faculty from across CUNY, and organizing reading groups and seminars.

Jonathan Gray also received high recognition for his scholarship from the Graduate Center, receiving a Faculty Fellowship at the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics. The award comes with 2 course releases and participation in weekly conversations at the Center.

Olivera Jokic won a University Faculty Fellowship Publications Program award this semester, which gave her 3 hours of reassigned time this semester for research and participation in the FFPP seminar.

Al Coppola received a Stewart Travel Award, funded by the CUNY Academy, which provided financial support for attending an academic conference.

Additionally, a remarkable number of English faculty members received grants from the Professional Staff Congress' Research Foundation. These PSC-CUNY grants can offer a wide range of support, from released time from teaching, to research travel, to summer salary, to the hiring of a research assistant.

Caroline Rietz received a PSC-CUNY grant to fund one course release for continued work on her second book manuscript *Serial Nation: In And Around The Victorian Novel*. Similarly, **Melinda Powers** won a course release that will provide assistance for her book project, *The Whole Story of Athenian Performance*, which is under contract with University of Iowa Press.

Adam McKible received a PSC-CUNY grant for a project entitled "Ownership, Objectification, and Black Modernist Print Culture." The grant monies will be funding a research assistant. In addition to publishing two articles this year on Modernism in magazines, Prof. McKible was elected to the board of the Modernist Studies Association.

Other winners were **Jeffrey Heiman**, who received assistance for his novel-in-progress, and **Charles McKenzie**, whose award will fund a research assistant for a research study comparing experimental ENG 201-A classes to standard classes. Prof. Heiman also reports that *J Journal: New Writing on Justice*, a scholarly publication that he edits with **Adam Berlin**, received two special mentions for fiction in this year's *Pushcart Prize* anthology.

External Recognitions

Alex Long reports that his third book of poems, *Still Life*, won the White Pine Press Poetry Prize. Scheduled for publication in November 2011, the manuscript was screened for consideration in a blind review process from a pool of submissions exceeding 500, and then was selected as the winner by the poet Alike Barnstone. Prof. Long was also nominated—for the 7th time—for a Pushcart Prize: The Best of the Small Presses. "I'm becoming the Susan Lucci of The Pushcart Prize," he writes, still awaiting word.

After publishing the biography *Flora Nwapa: A Pen And A Press* (New York: Triatlantic Press, 2010), **Marie Umeh** organized a one-day conference on the Nigerian feminist here in New York on eve of the United Nations' International Women's Day Celebrations, March 7, 2011. Related to her scholarship on Nwapa, Prof. Umeh was appointed the Main Representative of the Widows Development Organization, a United Nations Non-Governmental Organization that is headquartered in Enugu, Nigeria. She was also named the first American Representative to the UN Forum of Arts and Culture in Nigeria, as well as the Vice-President of the African Literature Association's Women's Caucus.

Veronica Hendrick has been accepted into The Summer Research Seminar at Stanford Law School: *Academic Freedom, Free Speech, and The First Amendment*. Her project will investigate the connection between teaching banned books and academic freedom. This is the second summer research award she has received from The Institute for Constitutional History.

Baz Dreisinger produced three segments for NPR about Caribbean music between July and April. She also reviewed two books in the *New York Times Book Review*, one a biography of Bob Marley and one an autobiography by rapper Ice-T.

John Staines received a grant to attend a Folger Institute Seminar at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington in May and June. The topic is "The Making of _Paradise Lost_" and covers the writing, publication, and printing of the first editions of Milton's epic. Prof. Staines also had two articles on the poet Edmund Spenser published this year.

Mark McBeth was elected to the faculty of the Ph.D. Program in English at the Graduate Center with a concentration in Composition & Rhetoric. He was also elected to the Executive Board of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, a national association of writing professionals with interests in developing and directing writing programs.

Effie Cochran was an invited speaker at the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages TESOL 2011 Annual Conference in New Orleans. She led a session that discussed how TESOL instructors can use Forensic Linguistics to help the nonnative student of English avoid committing language crimes. Once again, she is taking a class of 15 students to Greece for a summer session special topics course on the History and Culture of Thessaloniki.



John Matteson
Alumni Distinguished Faculty Award



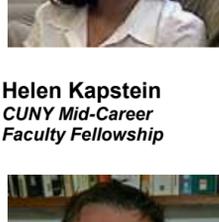
Nivedita Majumdar
Back-to-Back Scholarly Excellence Awards



Kim Helmer
Teaching Recognized



Toy-Fung Tung
Mentorship Award



Helen Kapstein
CUNY Mid-Career Faculty Fellowship



Paul Narkunas
Center for Humanities Fellowship



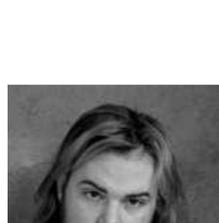
Jonathan Gray
Center for Place, Culture and Politics Fellow



Olivera Jokic
Faculty Fellowship Publications Program



Adam McKible
Modernist Studies Association Board Member



Alex Long
Award-Winning Poetry



Marie Umeh
International Honors



Veronica Hendrick
Stanford Law School Research Seminar



Baz Dreisinger
Caribbean Music Critic



John Staines
Milton Seminar at the Folger Library



Mark McBeth
Ph.D. Program in English



Effie Cochran
TESOL 2011 Annual Conference

English Matters 3.4 is a more-or-less regular publication of the John Jay English Department for the instruction and delight of students in our major and minor programs. Questions? Comments? Complaints? Want to get involved? Contact the editors, Prof. Al Coppola, acoppola@jjay.cuny.edu, and Prof. Olivera Jokic, ojokic@jjay.cuny.edu.