



This month, we're all about giving credit where credit is due. Spring is awards show season, of course, so perhaps that's what got us thinking that it's high time we recognized our outstanding students and faculty here in the English Department.

Accordingly, this month we'll be running down the long list of awards that our faculty have won for their research this year. But first we're going to check in with a couple of extraordinary seniors who have elected to pursue an honors degree. What—you didn't know that it's possible to earn an English B.A. with Honors? Well, these students will be the first to tell you it ain't easy, but the rewards of developing an in-depth research project one-on-one with a faculty mentor can be rich indeed. Hear their stories—and join us in congratulating their initiative!

Of course, don't forget that the real red carpet event is scheduled for May 21, when the department hosts the second annual English Major Awards Luncheon. You won't want to miss that chance to socialize with faculty and other majors as we gather to recognize our outstanding students. But there's no need to wait until May to get together with faculty and students. See the Department News for a number of upcoming functions, including an English Major Career Workshop that's happening *today!*

No matter how you look at it, the English community has a lot to be proud of. So read on! And enjoy!

## Department News

*English Majors Career Workshop TODAY in 2200N at 3:30 p.m.!*

- In the latest installment of our *Work with Words* careers series, three speakers will discuss how their BA in English from public universities prepared them for professional careers in public relations, media sales and criminal law. Today, we'll be hearing from **Rob O'Connor** of *The Associated Press*; **Joe McCormack** of the *Bronx District Attorney's Office*; and **Kyle Potvin**, *President of SPLASH Communications*. Light food and drink will be served, and Q&A will follow. Don't miss this chance to learn, network and socialize with your English Department community. **Monday April 26, 3:30-5:00 PM, in North Hall Room 2200.**

### Senior Research Showcase!

- All the graduating seniors in Prof. JoEllen Delucia's senior seminar on law and literature will present original research at a symposium scheduled for **next Monday, May 3, at 4pm in 630T**. Each student will discuss his or her research for five minutes, using power point, with group Q&A to follow. Come down and support our graduating seniors, and hear all about their fascinating senior research projects. On the program are: **Ilona Zeltser**, "Dueling in the Eighteenth Century"; **Vonyke Akers**, "Relationships between Law and Women in the Eighteenth Century"; **Elaine Pinzon**, "Eliza Haywood's *Clitander: Guilty of Infanticide?*"; **Erica Hahn**, "Violence in the State of Nature"; **Julissa Actosta**, "Women, Rights, and Slavery in the Eighteenth Century"; **Jodel Jeremie**, "Sex and Natural Law in the Eighteenth Century"; and **Judith Leconte**, "Fraud in the Eighteenth Century."

### Still Time to Apply!

- The deadline for applications for both sessions of John Jay's Pre-Law Boot Camp is now May 14. If you're thinking about law school, these intensive one-week programs (June 1-4 for freshmen and sophomores; June 7-10 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.ijay.cuny.edu/centersinstitutes/prelaw/bootcamp.asp>.

### Save the Date!

- Remember that the annual English Major Awards Luncheon is planned for Friday, May 21. Mark your calendars for this splendid year-end event, where we recognize student excellence in the classroom and celebrate our booming major program

## Student Honors

*This being the first year that John Jay will graduate English Majors in many, many years, we in the Department are proud of all our graduating seniors. In this issue of English Matters, we are making special recognition of a couple of seniors who have elected to seek an Honors degree. The requirements are very rigorous—they must write a substantial honors thesis (25pp. approximately) with their independent study advisor. Some projects, like Jesse Lewis' study of Jacobean Revenge Tragedy's relationship to contemporary depictions of revenge in such films as Kill Bill, emerged out of the senior seminar, while others developed from prior coursework that the student wished to take to the next level in an independent study. One this is certain—an Honors degree isn't for everyone (and isn't that the point?), but as you'll see, all that hard work can lead to a transformative intellectual experience.*



**Rachel Ramirez**

Rachel Ramirez freely admits that the ambition of her study of Virginia Woolf and queer theory is making her panic. But that's just because she's been working with both Professor Narkunas and Professor Mills on the problem of homosexual anxiety and memory in *Mrs. Dalloway*, issues in the novel that Rachel reads as being repressed by a character's "compulsive heterosexuality."

Rachel became interested in Queer Theory, and writers like Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Evelyn Waugh, E.M. Forster, Jean Rhys, in earlier coursework, when it became a central intellectual concern for her "to understand what 'queer' means both academically and personally," she says. "Does it challenge the status quo of heterosexual and homosexual binaries...because that is what the dominant culture accepts?"



**Prof. Paul Narkunas**

She credits the careful attention of two professors in helping her along this journey of intellectual discovery.

"Professor Narkunas has been so helpful in this learning process by assigning the works of Michel Foucault, Adrienne Rich, Terry Eagleton and Monique Wittig to me throughout the semester. And of course, Professor Mills has been so helpful as well by allowing me to work out my ideas in conversation with her, and I get such a tremendous amount of feedback from her that when I go back to write, I find that I'm arguing with myself over the way I've articulated or translated something from any one of these literary theorists. I write something, revise it, delete it and then write something new to only delete it again five minutes later! I'm so privileged and honored to be working with both of these professors who are experts in their respective fields of study, and that's perhaps the best part of this process—I'm learning from those who have knowledge to better myself as a young academic."

Her project director, Prof. Paul Narkunas, stated that he is most impressed with Rachel's ability to truly revise her thinking. "Rachel initially came to me last Fall with the idea of completing an independent study on literary theory with a special focus on gender and queer studies...we morphed the independent study into an Honor's Thesis with targeted theoretical readings to frame and broaden her already excellent readings of Woolf in her seminar paper with Professor Mills." Prof Narkunas reports that his has helped Rachel revisit *Mrs. Dalloway* "with fresh eyes and new concepts." She's learning that "no paper, even after it has been submitted for an English Department class, is necessarily finished." He says that she already "has written extensively," and he expects that in the end, her honor's thesis "will offer Rachel an enormous sense of accomplishment both professionally and personally. She will have a polished work of writing for graduate and/or professional school admissions, as well as the satisfaction of being able to spend time developing her own complex thinking on, and in relationship to, literary texts."

Prof. Jean Mills, who has also been instrumental in helping Rachel develop her project, couldn't agree more. "Working with Rachel Ramirez on Virginia Woolf has been an extraordinary gift to me...Her curiosity, generosity, discipline, and skills as a writer, a thinker, and a reader are exceptional, and I look forward to reading her published work in the future."



**Sifat Azad**

While Rachel has dived deep into critical theory, another senior, Sifat Azad, is working on an independent creative writing project with her mentor, Prof. Adam Berlin. She says she has been writing stories "continuously," ever since taking Prof. Berlin's fiction writing classes, and her project emerged from their collaboration. She explains that in the collection of short stories she's writing, "like Junot Diaz's *Drown* or Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*, many of characters seem similar and all of the pieces thread together thematically, but ultimately each story is unique." He subject matter is what you *might* expect, "relationships, people and life in general," but with a focus that's all her own. "Professor Berlin noticed the common themes of assimilation, secrecy, and concealment in many of my pieces and suggested that I make a collection of short stories. Since these themes obviously interest me, a collection would allow me to explore each subject from several different angles."



**Prof. Adam Berlin**

The process of working on this linked collection of stories has proved to be a learning experience for Sifat in many senses. "Aside from learning more about the techniques and forms of fiction such as voice, point of view, rhythm, and imagery," she says, "I am learning more and more about myself as a writer. I often write about matters that are close to me. And though my stories are fictionalized, by developing the characters in my pieces, I am able to view them from a new light and see things from another perspective."

Sifat credits Prof Berlin for being a "a talented editor and a supportive mentor" who "reviews each of my manuscripts sentence by sentence." Now, she says that "I understand how important and rewarding the revision process really is... he inspires me to continue writing."

For his part, Professor Berlin stated that he "was immediately impressed with Sifat's strong voice—edgy, tough and honest—and the way she used subtle details in her character-driven stories to convey theme." After taking writing courses with Prof. Berlin, Sifat asked him to serve as her CUNY BA mentor. For her honors project, Prof. Berlin explains that "Sifat is weaving thematic ideas about assimilation through four separate stories. All four stories will be linked by a single narrator, who watches the changes in herself and her family as they become Americanized. This project will allow Sifat to start thinking beyond the confines of a single story. Eventually, Sifat hopes to write a memoir or a novel; the fictional techniques she refines in our Independent Study will help Sifat when she begins work on a larger writing canvas."

## Faculty Awards

*In an issue of English Matters dedicated to honors and awards, we'd be remiss if we didn't take a moment to say a few words about the extraordinary success your English faculty have had in winning support and recognition for their own research.*



**Prof. Veronica Hendrick**  
*Leading a Graduate Seminar in Law and Lit*

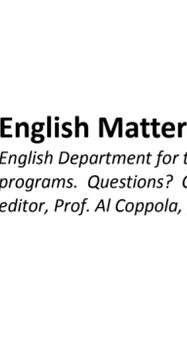
As you probably know, college professors are expected to do a good deal more than teach. We mentor students and engage in other kinds of university service while also pursuing our research, whether that's authoring scholarly articles, composing a book of literary criticism, or writing novels, plays or collections of poetry. So far, over the 2009-2010 academic year, upwards of twenty faculty members have won awards for their research. This is an extraordinary achievement by any measure—and that's just the list as we went to press!

The kinds of awards vary a great deal, although most assist works-in-progress. Some of us, like Jean Mills, were awarded travel funds to conduct research in far-flung archives. (Prof. Mills is off to inspect the Hope Mirrlees archive at Cambridge for her book project on women writers published by Virginia Woolf). Others—like Alexa Capeloto, Richard Haw and Helen Kapstein, to name just a handful—won funding through the PSC-CUNY (our union as public educators) for a teaching load reduction next year, so that they'll be able to devote more time to their writing projects. Still others, like Olivera Jokic and JoEllen Delucia, were admitted into research seminars that bring together scholars from all over the university (and sometimes the world) to share ideas and work on similar research projects. Veronica Hendrick even did them one better—she was tapped to serve as a faculty leader at McGill University's Law and Humanities Graduate Summer Workshop.



**Prof. Alexander Schlutz**  
*Best New Book in Romanticism Studies*

Then there were those of us who were nationally recognized for their scholarly accomplishments. John Matteson, who won the 2009 Pulitzer Prize in Biography for his book *Eden's Outcasts*, served as a juror for the Dashiell Hammett Awards for Crime Fiction and for the Pulitzer Prize in Biography. Their three other faculty were given national recognition for their publications: Alexander Schlutz won the International Conference on Romanticism's award for best new book in Romanticism Studies, while Mark McBeth was given a Special Administrator Award by the Council of Writing Program Administrators for a recent article. What's more, Alex Long's recent book of poetry won the Center for Book Arts Chapbook Competition this year, and he's still waiting to hear about his nomination for a Pushcart Prize.



**Prof. Alex Long**  
*Award-Winning Poetry Collection*

And right here at John Jay, Nivedita Majumdar was singled out by President Travis to receive the prestigious Scholarly Excellence Award. Just a handful are bestowed on the college each spring to recognize exceptional scholarly productivity in the past three years.

We're thrilled that our colleagues are getting the recognition they deserve for their scholarly achievements, and we're sure that, as students in their classes, you'll be benefiting from our faculty's uncommon commitment, intelligence and scholarly expertise.

A full list of award winners is as follows:

**Al Coppola:** named Chair of the Columbia University Faculty Seminar in Eighteenth-Century European Culture; also won a PSC-CUNY grant.

**JoEllen Delucia:** NEH summer seminar at the University of Nebraska, "The Americanization of British Romanticism, Then and Today." Also selected by CUNY Center for the Humanities to participate in the 2010-2011 Mellon Seminar on the topic of "Feeling" at the Graduate Center.

**Veronica Hendrick:** Selected as faculty member for Law and Humanities Graduate Summer Workshop, McGill University

**Olivera Jokic:** Won the International Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Fellowship for the Seminar for Junior Scholars (Belfast). Also received a PSC-CUNY grant for summer research.

**Alexander Long:** 2010 Winner of the Center for Book Arts Chapbook Competition. 2010 Nominee for a Pushcart Prize, the Best of the Small Presses (awaiting word)

**Nivedita Majumdar:** 2010 Recipient of the John Jay College Faculty Scholarly Excellence Award. Also won a PSC-CUNY grant.

**John Matteson:** Served as a juror for the Dashiell Hammett Awards for Crime Fiction and for the Pulitzer Prize in Biography. Has also created the Rachel Wetzsteon Prize in the Columbia University English department, to be given annually for the best master's essay on a subject in 20th-century poetry. The award honors Prof. Matteson's Ph.D. classmate, a poet who passed away last year.

**Mark McBeth:** Special Recognition Award from the Council of Writing Program Administrators (at their national conference in Minneapolis, MN) for the article "Memoranda of Fragile Machinery: A Portrait of Shaughnessy as Intellectual Bureaucrat."

**Melinda Powers:** participated in the NEH "Page and Stage" seminar; received a PSC-CUNY Research grant; also received the Philadelphia Constantinidis Essay in Critical Theory Award for the essay "Unveiling Euripides."

**Alexander Schlutz:** His new book, *Mind's World: Imagination and Subjectivity from Descartes to Romanticism*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009) won the International Conference on Romanticism's Jean-Pierre Baricelli prize for best book in Romanticism Studies in 2009.

Additionally, the following faculty were awarded PSC-CUNY research Foundation Grants to assist their research next year:

**Alexa Capeloto, Bettina Carbonell, Effie Cochran, Jay Gates, P. J. Gibson, Richard Haw, Jeffrey Heiman, Helen Kapstein, Jean Mills, Paul Narkunas, Tara Pauliny and John Staines.**

## English Matters 2.5

*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 editor, Prof. Al Coppola, [acoppola@ijay.cuny.edu](mailto:acoppola@ijay.cuny.edu).*