



Got books?

Of course you do! It's September after all, and a whole stack of school books is probably glowering at you from your bookshelf, or from that pile on the floor in the corner of your room. All that reading just sitting there is almost like a dare: "Here's what you're going to be working on for the next three months," it seems to say. "Are you up for it?"

As a John Jay English major you know the answer to that one. Of course you are. September's here, and a brand new semester is about to unspool. That's why we've dedicated this issue of *English Matters* to the fine art of getting off on the right foot. Below you'll see that our Department Chair, Prof. Marny Tabb, has some words of welcome for you (and some timely advice), and in our continuing feature, "Life in Books," we polled some of your peers (and a couple of your professors) about what makes for a good class—and how you know you've just enrolled in one. Also, don't miss this month's profile of two of the most important people you'll ever want to meet as an English major: our unstoppable department administrative team, Alicia Kelly and Erica Wise.

Major Notes



Prof. Marny Tabb

English Department Chair

Welcome to you all, both new and returning students! Our English major graduated its first class in 35 years last June, a select group of fifteen students. The census of majors and minors grows steadily, now numbering in the hundreds. This year we will offer career workshops, internship possibilities and other activities that will culminate in our English Majors/Minors luncheon where we will celebrate Best Essays, Best Creative Writing, and the induction of new students into Sigma Tau Delta (English Honor Society).

Some early fall reminders: (1) We need to have reliable email access to you. Check your jjay account regularly, say every class day, if it's not your primary account.

(2) By now, all English majors should have received the name of their advisor. You are required to meet with your advisor before you register for spring classes in early November. Your advisor can make sure that you are taking core courses in the proper sequence; remind you of ENG or LIT courses that match your interests; tell you about ENG or LIT courses offered by our department (Writing, Film, and Journalism) as well as other interesting minors (Justice Studies, Human Rights etc.); help you organize your remaining semesters at John Jay; provide an interested and sympathetic ear for other academic concerns. If you want to change advisors, get in touch with Administrative Coordinator Alicia Kelly (akelly@jjay.cuny.edu) or Major Coordinator Professor Allison Pease (apease@jjay.cuny.edu).

English Minors: Professor Jay Walitalo is your advisor; contact him for information about courses or to sign off once you have finished your minor (walitalo@jjay.cuny.edu).

We look forward to seeing you throughout the year -- in our classrooms and down at our offices in the Annex (619 W. 54th St., 7th floor).

Department News

- Sigma Tau Delta, the international English Honor Society, has a John Jay chapter. Learn more about it at www.English.org. If you are interested in becoming a member, and think you might meet the requirements, contact Faculty Sponsor, Caroline Reitz at creitz@jjay.cuny.edu. Opportunities include publication in student journals, service projects, and internships.
- *The Quill* is the literary magazine sponsored by the Creative Writers Association at John Jay College. If you're looking to get published, whether it is short fiction, poetry, or artwork, contact the President, Lee Koch at lee.koch@jjaycuny.edu or the Editor-in-Chief, Joanna Truglio at Joanna.truglio@jjay.cuny.edu. They are taking open submissions, and they wish to work with students on making progress in their writing and publishing careers.
- Did you know John Jay has a student newspaper? Find out how you can write, take photos, design or edit for *The John Jay Sentinel*. Send an e-mail to jjsentinel@jjay.cuny.edu or stop by the newsroom at 1535N in Club Row.
- Fans of Virginia Woolf and/or Prof. Jean Mills should go to the New York Public Library on October 19 to her speak on Woolf's relationship to the Cambridge femi-

Life in Books

Our continuing feature, "Life in Books," asks the hard questions about what makes us tick. Sometimes. This time we're asking the question that's on everyone's mind in the

What's a "good" class and how do you know you're in one?



Stephanie Rojas

I know I'm in a good class when we achieve lots of small goals to reach the big goal, which is a deep understanding of the topic. One thing is certain, I know I'm in a good class when my professor knows my name and knows my work. When a professor takes the time to get to know his/her students, it tells me right off the bat that the course is worthwhile; as opposed to a professor who simply hands out a sign-in sheet and doesn't bother to know who is who.



Audri Moss

A memorable class is an environment in which creativity and knowledge are welcome and fostered. It is a place where we are invited to discuss our viewpoints but not forced to have one. One where it is more important to know, analyze, and enjoy the material instead of squeezing as much material as possible into a semester. Where we are respected for our brains that have complex emotions and thoughts, are not treated like machines.



Lee Koch

No matter how good the material, no matter which requirement it fills, a class is only as 'good' as the professor that teaches it. I've had tenured professors phone it in, and I've had adjunct professors blow my mind. I bring my all to every class, and if the professor does the same, no matter how uninteresting the subject, no matter how heavy the workload, I know it will be a good, if not amazing class.



Disha Bownes

I know it's going to be a good class if the professor has a smile on his/her face and I know he/she wants to be there.



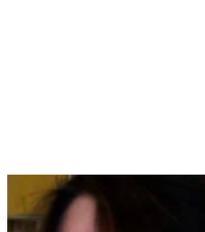
Prof. Caroline Reitz

I know it's going to be a good class based on the syllabus (amount of papers, percentages, amount of allowed absences, etc.) and the responses from the class (funny, energetic, etc.)



Javon Taylor

All too often during my academic career I have been told that I must study hard or I will be marked a failure. Only with time did I learn that grades are meaningless, since they are often only indicators of how well you can memorize facts on a particular day. The most enjoyable classes are the ones that invoke creativity, spark imagination and make you want to question the professors' teachings. To believe on blind faith is the sign of someone who has lost the will to learn. However, the most important factor in determining whether or not a class is enjoyable, is friends. To silently sit among a sea of silent people and never know a single name makes for a dull class.



Urieke Brown

A good class is one in which I am challenged to think for myself and encouraged to develop my own ideas. The class discussions should be structured but there should be allowance for the students to express the ideas that stood out to them and they have questions about. I know when I am in a "good" class when I am still thinking about the material after the period has ended.



Lauren Mallon

I also think a memorable class is one that keeps you thinking out side the classroom. A professor that links the class to every day life stays with you and could change the way you look at the world. I've been lucky enough to have a few of those.



Nina Perez

I think a great professor makes all the difference in whether or not your class will be a "good" one. When you know you have an educator who truly cares about their students' success in the class, it shows and makes it easier to approach them, ask for help if it's needed, and can make the material a lot more interesting. If you have a professor who does not care if you're present, just assigns things and reads straight from a book, doesn't mind if you're failing, and does nothing to help you as their student, it not only reflects the type of teacher they are, but it can also reflect on the final grade of the student.



Anamika Kumari

I've witnessed that in classes where the professor is enthusiastic, gets along well with the students, gives students the equal opportunity, tend to have a better class time. I've also witnessed professors who believe they are superior to the students and act as if students don't know anything. We're mostly adults now and I feel both professors and students should have an equal amount of discussion in class.



Prof. Al Coppola

I'm always stumped by the fact that I can teach the same material to two different classes on the same day, and one just soars while the other falls flat. Chemistry is key. It sounds like our students really value an engaged and dynamic professor, and I find the reverse is just as true. When a class is full of students who are eager to learn and take risks, and who are willing to take on challenging assignments outside their comfort zone, then I know that it's going to be a great semester.

Department Profiles

Alicia Kelly and **Erica Wise** are the two familiar faces you will see every time you come to the English Department. If you think that the work of the English Department is all done in the classrooms, you should meet these two! They are the backbone of the Department and make it possible for every semester to go from beginning to end without any serious glitches. Because they know everything there is to know not only about the Major/Minor, but also about the Department and the College, they are the people to know in the Department!

What do they do, you ask?

Alicia Kelly (akelly@jjay.cuny.edu) is the main administrative coordinator for the English Department. How has she affected your life so far? She has assigned you the faculty advisor; she wrote your 'Welcome' letter; she has probably answered at least a few of your questions about course offerings and major requirements. She also works with the Department Chair and the Major Coordinator to create a rich offering of required and elective courses for the academic year. Once that is done, she schedules those courses and assists with assigning faculty. Additionally, she is the Department webmaster and the administrator of our listserv.

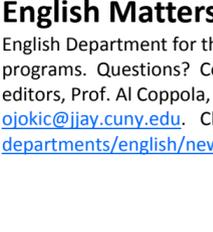
Erica Wise is the Department's administrative assistant. She handles the day-to-day operation of the office and acts as a liaison between administration and the department. She helps students and faculty get what they need; if she cannot help directly, she connects you with someone who can help (and, trust us, she knows everyone). Basically, she tries to keep things running smoothly, for the Department and for the students. She is most easily reached by email (ewise@jjay.cuny.edu)

Since they know all about the Department and the Major/Minor, we asked Alicia and Erica for some helpful tips on how to make our students' lives easier and their experience in the Major/Minor better. Here's what they had to say:



Alicia Kelly
Administrative Coordinator

Check your John Jay email account daily or as often as possible! If you are reading this newsletter, you obviously use your John Jay email account or at least have it forwarded to an email account that you use. Please remind your fellow classmates who you know don't use their John Jay email account that they should! The department and the College use John Jay email as a main means of communicating with students regarding news, deadlines, and events.



Erica Wise
Administrative Assistant

Try to make appointments with your professor or advisor before coming to visit! I can't tell you how many times people come by looking for a professor that's not here and leave the office less than happy. Oh...and get comfortable using the shuttle between 10 Avenue/59th Street and the 54th Street Annex. I find it especially useful during the winter months.

English Matters 3.1 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 Olivera Jokic, ojokic@jjay.cuny.edu. Check out past issues here: <http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/departments/english/news.php>