

Loose Canons

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Emory University English Department

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Mark Ledden and Renee Dye share insights into the corporate world. See article on page 4.



Mark Ledden and Renee Dye

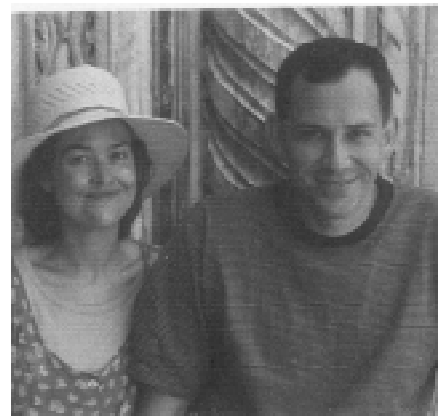
Six Degrees, No Separation: The Surprises of Working Together in Small Town, NC

By Annie and Randy Ingram ('94, '94)

Most of what we would say about being a married couple in academia is not surprising: we do have great jobs, Davidson is a fine school, we are extremely lucky, it is wonderful to live together, and we are genuinely grateful. But the litany of such blessings is both embarrassing and unhelpful: because we got these jobs largely through luck and fortunate coincidences, we are in no position to advise others. So we decided to write most of this article in our own voices and to emphasize some of the surprises of working together at a small liberal arts college in a small town. We drafted our responses separately, but as you will see, they frequently overlap, and one voice repeats the other.

Annie: Perhaps the greatest surprise for me was the unit phenomenon: since there are two professors with the same last name in the English Department, people tend to think of us as a single, inseparable unit. Until I requested otherwise, we shared a shelf for departmental mail (marked simply "Ingram"). If someone wants to know whether Randy is available (for a student appointment, a dinner engagement, a panel discussion), that person has no qualms asking me whether he has time. Sometimes I get the impression that we are interchangeable; one Ingram is as good as the other. An unfortunate flipside to the unit phenomenon is the comparison effect. A couple years ago, when Randy had received several grants and had published more than I, one of my senior colleagues (who meant well) said to me, "now when are we going to hear about YOUR awards and accomplishments?" I'm sure she never would have made this comparison between me and another junior colleague—at least not so openly and directly.

Randy: In a recent note, Holly Bergstrom described this piece as "an article on being a married couple in academia." But most of the time Annie and I are not "in academia"; we're in Davidson, North Carolina. And although Davidson College is an academically excellent undergraduate institution, the differences between "in academia" and "in Davidson" can be vast—comparable to the differences between "Jane and Stanley" and "Ozzie and Harriet." I think both Annie and I have been a bit startled by how colleagues, townspeople, and especially students imagine us as a collective. For example, during my first year



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Help Locate These Lost Alumni

If you know the whereabouts of the following alumni (Masters and PhD), please help us re-establish contact (see address info below):

Cassandra Bagley	'94
Laura Brown	'95
Amy Buttery	'96
Mary Carnahan	'92
Charles DeGroot	'98
David Demco	'93
Susan Duncan	'96
Katherine Early	'91
Larry Eby	
John Fitzgerald	'95
Sharon Forshee	'94
Carla Mannix	'91
Stanley Goldman	'87
Suzy Gregory	'95
Christopher Hammond	'93
Tom Hockersmith	
Margaret Jacobs	'85
Matthias Konzett	'91
Keith O'Shaughnessy	
Rosa Prohias	'95
Rhonda Ray	'89
Virginia Ross	'85
Susan Tush	'91

Loose Canons

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at Davidson, when I was trying to parlay a visiting assistant professorship into a tenure-track job, I was horrified by students' referring to Annie on my evaluations. Under the all-important "Evaluate the instructor overall" (the ultimate question on Davidson's form), one wrote, "I think it's cute how he and his wife share an office." Was my teaching of that course—a survey of English literature that begins in 1660, just where my graduate training ends—brilliant, adequate, dangerously incompetent? Who knows? Now that I have the tenure-track job and have been teaching at Davidson with Annie for four years, students are perhaps even more likely to think of us as a unit. These current students have never known Annie Merrill, only "Mrs. Dr. Ingram," a sobriquet that suggests what cuteness costs Annie. Just a few weeks ago a first-year student I taught this spring told me that peers had advised her to take a course "with one of the Ingrams," and while I do appreciate the compliment, I can't help wondering, "Do students find Stanley and Jane interchangeable? Were Simone and Jean-Paul 'cute'? Am I 'in academia' or in Pleasantville?"

Annie: Then there's the cuteness factor: we are "the Ingrams," "Randy and Annie," even the tongue-tied "Andy and Randy." Our students don't hesitate to tell us how "cute" all the English majors think we are—and even though the History, Spanish, and French departments here also have married couples among their full-time faculty, I've never heard any of them called "cute." The most egregious evidence of this cuteness came when students routinely referred to us as "Mr. Dr. Ingram" and "Mrs. Dr. Ingram" as a way of distinguishing us; I soon explained that I much preferred "Annie" and did not consider it at all disrespectful.

Randy: I have been surprised to learn that for a couple within one department at a high-contact liberal arts college, there is no outside of the job. Presumably when English professors choose partners from outside the profession, the resulting couples do not regularly spend dinner discussing the relative merits of scholarly journals or methods for assessing student writing or the challenges of teaching literary theory to undergraduates. And even when two English professors work at different institutions, they cannot dissect a department meeting or analyze a common student's neuroses. But when Annie and I are not working, we are talking about our work—almost every detail of it, since we share so many of those details in common: for instance, we teach many of the same courses in the same rooms with many of the same students. The results of this constant sharing are often exciting, but also often tiring, as precious time with the beloved becomes work time with a colleague.

Annie: As we spend more time here, I am also surprised at the extent to which this job has defined our relationship and our lives. These are our first full-time, tenure-track jobs, and we've been in them as long as we've been married. Our life together has been shaped by long hours at work, little sleep, tenure anxiety, and all the other stresses that come with trying to keep an academic job in competitive times. As much as the job is a large part of our marriage, our marriage is a large part of the job. Perhaps because we live in a small, close community, our private life seems more public. I'm still surprised by how often I must decide between private time alone or public, social time with Randy, but rarely do I get the option of private time with Randy.

Finally, we (both of us again now) want to end as we began: by acknowledging our tremendously good fortune. Having commuted between Atlanta and Davidson during the 1994-1995 academic year, we were eager to work together at Davidson, but we have been surprised by how rewarding that work has been for each of us. We are each better teachers, scholars, and colleagues because of our personal and professional collaborations. And at the risk of still more cuteness, we agree that this happy surprise more than outweighs the unexpected challenges. 🌟

L & U State University invites applications for a tenure-track appointment at the rank of Assistant Professor. In addition to a Ph.D. candidates should possess specialization in the following areas: Rhetoric and Composition, Nineteenth-century American Fiction, Chaucer, Film Studies, Women's Literature, African-American and World Literature. Ability to teach occasional courses in English education and design computer-assisted courses is also desirable. The teaching load is 4 courses per semester, with at least two sections of freshman composition. Committee service and continuing professional development are required. Nestled in the rural hills of one of those big states whose name you can never remember; our campus is just 75 miles from a fascinating city that you'll never have time to visit. Here at Large and Underfunded State University, we are proud to announce that we only beat junior faculty twice a term. Salary is commensurate with the poverty-line for a family of four. See ads for a similar appointment at our sister institution, Small, Remote, and Broke College. Women and minorities are especially urged to apply.



Since I finished my degree in 1995, I've been a devoted reader of higher education job listings, and I fully expect to see this ad any day now. In 1996, I accepted a three-year appointment as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the State University of West Georgia in Carrollton, about an hour west of my home in Atlanta. I hoped that in those years I would win my dream job in some distant state ("Maybe Utah" as Nicolas Cage fantasized in *Raising Arizona*) or an acceptable local job that would avoid uprooting my family. While

neither of those things has happened, I have gained a better understanding of why more of the job listings are sounding like this siren song from *Large and Underfunded* and why so many academic jobs resemble the temporary position that I've held.

And I've been lucky with that position. Unlike many temporary academic jobs, West Georgia provided a decent salary, good benefits, genial colleagues, some travel funding, and the occasional opportunity to teach a class in my field. I made peace with my equivocal status. I revised my dissertation in the summers, swam through rivers of students in three writing and literature survey courses a quarter, and had a second child. I was busy but able to balance teaching with some writing and family life. However, since our teaching load increased to four courses a semester and enrollments almost doubled in some classes, that steady stream of students has become an ocean that threatens to drown all activity but the processing of grades.

While much of the conversation about the academic job crisis in *PMLA* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has pitted "us" (job seekers) against "them" (established faculty members), the increasing use of contract labor is really only one thread in a larger pattern of forces seriously pressuring the academic workplace. It's clear to me that West Georgia's troubles reflect trends that are making English Departments increasingly poor places to work across the country, such as: the pressure for universities to follow more of a business model, the erosion of tenure, and the failure of English Departments to explain what we do to those who fund us and the general public. As I've watched my tenure-track

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Calendar of Events

1999 Summer Writers' Festival

July 20, 1999 8:00 p.m.
Readings White Hall 205
Jim Shepard and Kevin Young

July 21, 1999 4:00 p.m.
Panel Discussion White Hall 205
Becoming a Writer
See authors listed below.

July 21, 1999 8:00 p.m.
Student Readings White Hall 205

July 22, 1999 8:00 p.m.
Readings White Hall 205
Beth Lordan and Mark Jarman

Jim Shepard is the author of five novels, *Flights*, *Paper Doll*, *Lights Out in the Reptile House*, *Kiss of the Wolf*, and *Nosferatu*, as well as a collection of short stories, *Battling Against Castro*. He is the J. Leland Miller Professor of English at Williams College.

Kevin Young's first poetry collection, *Most Way Home*, was selected for the National Poetry Series and won the Zachris First Book Prize from *Ploughshares*. He currently teaches English and African-American Studies at the University of Georgia.

Beth Lordan's first novel, *August Heat*, was published by Harper & Row in 1987. She is the recipient of a Creative Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and teaches creative writing at Southern Illinois University.

Mark Jarman is the author of six books of poetry, including *Questions for Ecclesiastes*. He is the recipient of a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and is a professor of English at Vanderbilt University.

Alternative Careers Outside of Academia: Panel Discussion with Renee Dye ('95) and Mark Ledden ('97)

by Miriam Chirico ('98)

Viewing the employment crisis in the humanities as a commonly accepted reality, Ph.D.s are turning more and more to the corporate sector for alternative jobs to support themselves after graduating. Renee Dye and Mark Ledden, two alumni of our English Department, chose to pursue careers as consultants at McKinsey and Company and were pleased to return to Emory on March 17, 1999 to share some of their experiences with the graduate students here.

They identified several fields available to academics in the humanities in addition to consulting, such as technical writing, organizational development, public relations, and investment banking. Mark explained in particular the traditional corporate communications work done by many of his clients, work that includes tasks such as technical writing and editing, sending out newsletters to internal employees as well as to stockholders of a company, speech writing for various executives, managing crisis situations with timely information to the public, or working with the news media. He also recommended the possibility of working as an executive trainer, teaching executives how to communicate or negotiate more effectively with others.

While moving from academia to the corporate sector is possible, the transition requires some preparation. Renee advised talking to a lot of people to gather information on what kinds of jobs are available. Having work experience outside of academia or being able to include

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and tenured colleagues struggle with teaching and administrative workloads that allow inadequate time for either scholarship or teaching, and as I've watched friends face agonizing personal choices and the challenges of commuter marriages, I've often thought of Barrett Browning's line: "... Get work; get work; / Be sure 'tis better than what you work to get" (*Aurora Leigh*).

On more philosophical days, I have tried to place the conditions of academic employment in a larger perspective: after all, many different types of professionals with advanced degrees face heavy work loads and the prospect of relocation. But in other fields, those demands are usually off-set with financial rewards that allow families to stay together. And "getting work" in academia increasingly means non-tenure track work. According to a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the reliance of many departments on non-tenure-track faculty to staff over half of their courses is a trend that is likely to continue. While that is enabling universities to cut costs, the situation ultimately benefits no one. How long will it be before tuition payers come to see English as "America's Fast-Food Discipline" as Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt have dubbed it for McDonald's-like hiring policies (*Academic Keywords: A Devil's Dictionary for Higher Education*, 1999)?

Those who argue that we should concentrate on the creation of more tenure-track jobs and the improvement of the academic workplace are undoubtedly right. Elaine Showalter's suggestion that recent Ph.D.s seek non-academic work, however, has practical appeal, especially since the larger economy is booming. There are even some academics, like Robert Weisbuch (president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation), who are attempting to reframe the significance of the Ph.D. to foster entrance into corporate and public policy sectors. Anyone interested in exploring non-academic work today may want to read *Outside the Ivory Tower: A Guide for Academics Considering Alternative Careers* by Margaret Newhouse (1993).

Emory's career center also offers counseling, assistance in turning a vita into a resume, and access to a network of Emory alums willing to provide job market information. I also recommend talking to everyone you know about his or her work experiences and connections, and I send out my thanks to the many friends, acquaintances, and colleagues who have shared their experience and advice with me. 🌟

Graduate Student Cassandra Jackson teaches "The Calculus of Color"

By Cathy Byrd, reprinted courtesy of *The Emory Report*

The class listed in Emory's spring course atlas as "The Calculus of Color" might at first sound like an art class on color theory, but instructor Cassandra Jackson intends for her class to explore mulatto figures and miscegenation in 19th and 20th century American literature.

The course takes its title from a chapter in Werner Sollors' book, *Neither Black Nor White*, a thematic exploration of biracial characters in European and American literature.

Jackson said students were drawn to the course for specific reasons. "A number of my students felt as though biracial people are very much a part of American culture and history, yet they hold an invisible space. Personal history also had an influence. A few are biracial or have a biracial parent. The students work hard and are really committed. Many of them feel a

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personal investment in the class because they see race issues as relevant to their lives.”

She and her class of 31 undergraduates are not only reading mulatto fiction but tracing conversations that emerged among 19th century African-American and white writers. “They frequently knew and read each other. I want to consider intertextual relationships that were part of a larger conversation about race.”

Both black and white 19th century writers used mulatto figures in anti-slavery fiction to humanize blacks. They also wrote to each other. They were very concerned about the black community and the place of blacks in America before and after the Civil War. “The rise in racism at the turn of the century also motivated white authors who might not have experimented with biracial characters to explore race relations through mulatto figures,” Jackson explained. “William Dean Howells, a white male writer, centered *An Imperative Duty* around a mixed race figure. Literature became a tool to talk about relationship problems.”



photo by: Jon Rou

a context within which both the writer and reader could indulge in racialized fantasy. “In class we are discussing what it means to represent these people as passionate and sexual in the 19th century,” Jackson said. “Some of the passages are titillating—they are pornographic in that sense. They also teach us about cultural perspectives of that time.”

As racial constructs, mulatto characters represent not only the rapport between races but a concession to traditional Eurocentric conceptions of beauty. Other ideas Jackson will explore with her class include a preoccupation with “passing” race propaganda and tabloid tactics in fictional writing about mixed-race characters.

This past fall Jackson taught a course on representations of slavery in 20th century African-American literature. In 1997 she introduced Emory students to a portrayal of female life in turn-of-the-century novels and the significance of popular culture in America. She’s been published in *The Oxford Companion to African-American Literature*, and her writing will be included in the upcoming *Cambridge Guide to Women’s Literature*.

Next month, at the Collegium for African-American Research Conference in Muenster, Germany, Jackson will present the paper “Tools of Resistance: Mulatto Figures in Frances E.W. Harper’s *Minnie’s Sacrifice* and Thomas Decker’s *The Octoroon of Cuba*.”

Jackson received her BA in English from Spelman College in 1994. “It was while reading texts like *Clotel* and different anti-slavery tracts that I discovered many biracial characters. I began wondering what role they played in the anti-slavery movement. I’m interested in how literature affects culture. I wanted to investigate what these characters meant in the context of African-American literature and life.”

Jackson’s dissertation, “Barriers Between Us: Re-examining Mulatto Figures in American Fiction from 1826-1903,” questions the notion of the ‘tragic mulatto’ and explores mulatto figures as vehicles of social, cultural and political ideas in American literature, beginning with James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans* and concluding with Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood*. ❁

business writing or general interest pieces in a portfolio of writing samples is an advantage. Résumés, which are different than the academic curriculum vitae, should be functional (pertaining to skills) rather than chronological, and no more than two pages long. Renee stressed that translating the talents that one develops through teaching and scholarship into skills that the business world identifies and needs is key to the job search. For example, teaching a class involves setting goals for students, running class discussions, and evaluating performance—which are all elements of a managerial position. The research and analysis that accompanies writing a seminar paper or a dissertation is essentially the work of an information analyst. And the demand for clear, persuasive writing—as well as for people who can impart these skills—is strong in many sectors; it is merely a question of marketing these skills for a corporate environment. In preparing a résumé, the prospective candidate should identify the skills necessary for the job and adjust his or her résumé to highlight those specific skills.

Finally, they encouraged a change in one’s attitude towards work outside of academia. Academia’s employment practices and traditional aversion to risk are increasingly out of step with the employer-employee dynamics that are now driving most professions. In the corporate world, change and personal development are constant. Employers demand performance and reward it. Employees demand new challenges and growth opportunities. A company which fails to offer its employees a compelling “value proposition” will quickly lose its top talent to competitors who offer more exciting, more rewarding positions. Academics who wish to make the leap into this world must be

prepared to rethink fundamentally their understanding of their own value and to clarify their understanding of what they want in a work environment.

Academics also hold a distorted view of the world outside the university walls, viewing a decision to move outside of academia as “selling out” or becoming “intellectually bankrupt.” Such myths need to be discarded before one can hope to make an effective transition into a corporate or governmental position. Also, the sense of despondency that many graduate students feel in a competitive market causes graduate students to undervalue their skills. Mark advised not setting one’s sights too low in looking for a position and he stressed how impressed employers are by the Ph.D. degree.

Mark and Renee also shared some of their personal experiences regarding their transition to the corporate sphere. Mark had friends in consulting and initiated discussions with them about McKinsey in general and the work they did there. Over the course of about a year, these discussions led to a series of interviews, and eventually, a job offer. He found his co-workers to be lively and intelligent and to exude a kind of optimism that is not often found within the academy. Renee addressed some of the disadvantages she first experienced, such as missing people who discussed her same literary interests and the loss of opportunities to use a rich vocabulary garnered from academic studies, but she also mentioned her ability to stay connected with academia, having delivered papers at two conferences in American literature.

Renee Dye and Mark Ledden provided a reassuring and inspirational forum for those wondering what the “alternatives” to academic positions were like, emphasizing how the skills they established within the English Department were readily applied elsewhere, and stressing that what matters most is a kind of gutsy, entrepreneurial mentality and a willingness to take risks. 🌊

Beyond the Leisure Principle

Bill Wandless (Class of 2046)

My flock, I have misled you.

Readers of my inaugural column have voiced a conviction, and perhaps a just one, that assemblages of 600-800 words, by their very nature, must be fluffy. All shorter published work belongs properly to four principal literary subsets: cereal box infotainment, top ten lists, death threats, and chowder recipes. All longer published work—with the exception of those extremely complicated chowder recipes requiring goggles and a spotter for safe preparation—must be designated “scholarly crazy talk” and belongs on the *curriculum vitae*. However, despite the universal recognition of the liminal space of 600-800 words *qua* fluff, I urge you to consider the untapped utility value of this numinous discursive forum.

The first, and perhaps richest, possibility falls squarely beneath the rubric of what the French call *gobbledygook* (the *d*, of course, is silent). The conventions of *gobbledygook* foment two forms of written expression: the provocative existential declaration (“I am the Lord of Textured Soy Protein!”) or, alternately, utter nonsense (“Despite the universal recognition of the liminal space of 600-800 words *qua* fluff, I urge you to consider the untapped utility value of this numinous discursive forum”). Both forms are duly represented in the award-winning prose of Judith Butler, hailed by the *lumpenproletariat* as “The slithiest of toves.” Though Butler sometimes tips the scales in excess of 800 words—my research indicates she, like the French, “rounds up”—her work must be considered exemplary of the genre.

In the Long Eighteenth Century (1451-1988), 600-800 words were primarily deployed in the service of scandal. Though some of the terminology—I’m thinking here of “periwig” and “infotainment”—may be hopelessly outdated, a tremendous amount of damage may still be done with a well-placed ampersand. Rumor has it, in fact, that I am the love child of Robert Bly and bell hooks: though I openly refer to myself as “Adamantine Bill,” it is widely known that I sign all my scholarly work with the incisively postmodern *nom de guerre*, “big sexy.” See? Such sly insinuation not only yields enough scandal to incense members of both the hooksian and Blythian camps, but it also undermines my own credibility and opens up the prospect of litigation in one elegant stroke. You can easily besmirch twoscore reputations in the space of 600-800 words, threescore if you use lots of kennings. It’s a game everyone can play but no one can win—academia *par excellence*.

I do not mean to suggest that 600-800 words cannot be employed to achieve vital academic ends. While *gobbledygook* and scandal may lack the epistemological weight and rhetorical force of scholarly crazy talk, 600-800 words may also be used to recuperate lost literatures, introduce terminological innovations, and generate subversive texts—ideally, all at the same time. I can’t tell you how often my students and colleagues—with minimal prompting—have wondered aloud, “Why is scholarly writing utterly devoid of the idiom of South Seas pirates circa 1850? And why don’t we use more of those swell French loan words in our literary criticism?” I’ll tell you why: because American literary critics are *scalawags* who lack *bouillon*. Were I not hurtling headlong toward 600 words already, I could dilate on the meanings of my chosen terms—while the critical use of *bouillon* is self-evident, the etymological sequence which defines *scalawag* as “Terry Eagleton” certainly deserves to be detailed more fully. Yet even here, on the cusp of 600, one can feel the edifice of received truths crumbling: Do pirates even *have* a literature? Do we, as critics, thinkers, and Americans, lack *bouillon*? Should Holly be keelhauled for allowing this to go on?

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Such is the power of 600-800 words. Though the forum lacks the breadth to wrestle with truly monumental academic subjects—I could not, in such limited space, defend my conviction that “smock” and “frock” are secretly verbs, for example—it’s not merely a vehicle for the dissemination of fluff. At least not anymore. As the pirates of the South Seas might say of 600-800 words “there’s plenty of *bouillon* in that there chowder.” And that, my flock, is booty we all can live with. 🌊

Is There a Future for Interdisciplinary Studies?

Dr. Rosemary Cox ('93)

When you have been in the classroom for as many years as I have, you realize that teaching is as subject to fads as the fashion industry. At one time, WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM was the key to holistic cognitive development; then ACTIVE LEARNING was hailed as the definitive classroom strategy, so much so it was made a component of faculty evaluations. Humanities departments have been especially involved in the MULTICULTURAL APPROACH to literature, restructuring the canon so that students and teachers from as recent as a decade ago would not recognize many of the titles on a syllabus from a typical freshman literature course today. There is one fad, however, that really should be made a lasting and viable part of the college curriculum—INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES—yet it, too, seems doomed to go the way of footnote documentation unless college students, faculty, and administration support and promote it.

In my position as a Professor of English at Georgia Perimeter College (a two-year institution), for many years I have had the opportunity to teach two different types of interdisciplinary courses. Our college has christened the first type *clustering*, where courses from two different disciplines (Freshman Composition and Political Science, for example) are taught separately, but the instructors try to coordinate the course content. For their required term paper, students select a topic that encompasses both fields—such as abolitionist views in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* for an American History/American Literature cluster course, or the principles of Hinduism demonstrated in the *Bhagavad Gita* for an Ancient World Literature/Ancient World History cluster. After a conference with both instructors to make sure the requirements for both courses are met and to allay the student’s misgivings about “pleasing two masters,” the term paper is then submitted separately to each instructor, for two separate grades. At GPC we have used clustering in our Honors Program with great success: besides feeling that they are saving themselves some grief by writing one paper for two courses, students are able to see the relationships between disciplines more clearly, and professors welcome the papers, stronger in both content and form.

The second type of interdisciplinary course I have taught is the classic blending of two disciplines, where both professors teach the same class, according to whatever division of time and subject matter they deem appropriate. After teaching Ancient World Literature as an interdisciplinary course with Ancient World History, I will never teach the class the same again. Understanding the historical context of the literature—and seeing the impact that literature has had on the culture—profoundly influences our understanding of the material and ourselves. With this type of class, careful planning is essential, as is agreement between the instructors on policies from attendance to grading. This does not mean that the two instructors have to think alike or have similar teaching styles: sometimes the contrast in professors is what makes the course vibrant.

Though our cluster courses at GPC are quite strong, sadly, the interdisciplinary classes are consistently canceled due to insufficient enrollment. The causes are numerous: students may

Are You Able to Use ABELL?

By Susan L. Peters, Ph.D., Coordinator for Language and Literature, Woodruff Library, Emory University

One of the library’s newest electronic databases is based on one of the oldest indexes available in paper: the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (aka ABELL) goes all the way back to 1920, and provides coverage between 1920-1955 that the Modern Language Association’s International Bibliography (MLAIB) does not.

There has long been a misperception that the MLAIB covers everything the literary scholar needs to have covered. This is not the case. First, before 1956, the MLA Bibliography only covered scholarship published in America. ABELL’s coverage was international from the very beginning. This makes ABELL’s coverage of the years 1920-1955 extremely important. Second, the journals covered by MLAIB and ABELL are different (though there is a degree of overlap) particularly in the early years. One researcher analyzed a period of 5 years and stated that the overlap was about 50%, meaning that 50% of the material in each index was unique to it. And last, ABELL includes book reviews, often sources of interesting and/or important critical analysis and commentary. In addition, ABELL also covers collections of essays and doctoral dissertations.

ABELL is compiled by the Modern Humanities Research Association and the internet version is released by Chadwyck-Healey. One can search by title, author or reviewer’s name, keyword, subject, publication details, or journal title. Searches can be refined by Boolean and proximity operators. If you’re unsure of the search terms to

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use, you can browse the indexes for each of the fields. You can also specify to include or not include book reviews, depending on your research needs. Before you fly out the door to try this wonderful resource, remember that, like the MLAIB, it does have weaknesses. One example is that ABELL had a bad patch for some years as editors came and went in rapid succession, and it shows in the indexing, which in the 1960's and part of the 70's is not as thorough as one would like. Remember, both ABELL and MLAIB rely heavily on volunteer indexers and a small paid staff. If staffing gets discombobulated, the end product will reflect that. Also, ABELL was slow to catch on with new areas of study, so a search on postcolonial will not reveal as much as one will find in MLAIB. At present, ABELL does not have as strong a search engine as MLAIB, though I understand the company is working on improvements. The bottom line is that anyone interested in doing a thorough search will use both the ABELL and the MLAIB online indexes and appreciate each for its capabilities. 🌟

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Michele Crescenzo's paper, "Cracking the Freudian Shell of Frances Newman's *Hard Virgin*," has been selected for the Society for the Critical Exchange's Allied Session on "Women, Class, and Sexuality in Southern Fiction" at the SCMLA Conference in October.

Chip Court is the recipient of a Dean's Teaching Fellowship for 1999-2000.

Gavin Drummond's review of *Relations: New and Selected Poems* by

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not know what interdisciplinary courses are; they may suffer from the misconception that they have to be an Interdisciplinary Studies major to take the course, or they fear the class will be too difficult. More often than not, however, the problem is a question of time and need—not enough students need both courses (our students get credit for two classes), or the classes are taught in a three-hour block which does not fit the schedules of our commuting, working students. It is for these last two reasons that the cluster courses work so well for us—the classes consist of a combination of cluster and non-cluster students, eliminating the need for a minimum of dual students.

Some colleges and universities experience another problem: lack of funding. Dr. John Inscoe (History) and Dr. Timothy Powell (English) at the University of Georgia gave a presentation at the recent Georgia Association of Historians conference where they discussed their experiences teaching their interdisciplinary course, "Multicultural Georgia." According to Dr. Powell, "The University has been very supportive of our efforts, and there is no shortage of student interest. The problem is that there is no existing administrative structure to pay for the second teacher to be in the classroom." Instructors must rely upon grants from the Humanities Center to teach these courses. While Inscoe and Powell are working on changing the funding structure, it is clear that college and university administrators must recognize the value of interdisciplinary courses and make them an integral part of the regular curriculum—the rule, rather than the exception.

Is there a future for interdisciplinary studies? Inscoe and Powell think so: they are planning Multicultural Studies in the South—a program that utilizes a panorama of disciplines: English, History, Education, Art, Music, Comparative Literature, Romance Languages, Anthropology, Geography, Theater, and Landscape Architecture. With such infinite possibilities, I also hope the answer is "yes." 🌟

A Writerly Perspective

Lynna Williams

I recently was sent a new novel to review and when, a little too quickly, I turned over the final page, I got not just a nasty paper cut, but a neatly centered two-line Author's Note that said, more or less, "This novel is a parody of *Lolita*." I called the newspaper that wanted the review to say I'd pass, since "Duh" would have been exactly 799 words short of the required length. That taken care of, though, I found it hard to concentrate, not even on my favorite "School's out!" celebration, which happens to involve re-reading *War and Peace* with the television tuned to an Atlanta Braves baseball game. (Oh, all right, here's the truth: If the Braves are up at least three runs, I read the *Peace* parts; if they're down three runs, I read the *War* parts; if it's inter-league play with the New York Yankees, I simply get into position to throw the book at the screen. Twice I've actually plunked George Steinbrenner's forehead, which is just one more thing that hypertext can't do.)

Lately, though, I've abandoned Leo altogether to ponder the ramifications of the "Turn-The-Page-And-I'll-Tell-You-What-You-Just-Read" method of ending a novel. Think about it. If every writer went just that extra little mile, hammering out not only a layered, complicated, nuanced, 500-page novel, but a L.-C.-N. 500-page novel with a two-line *explanation* afterward, the world would change instantly, and dramatically. There would be less hemming and hawing at book clubs, less wrangling over authorial intent at academic conferences, and—best of all—a potential drop in postcards from my Texas aunts. These aunts (my non-literary aunts) all have teenage grandchildren, and they slip a sentence like this into every

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note, "Amanda has a paper due on *The Great Gatsby*. What's that about anyway?"

With this new method, my aunts (and Amanda) would have Gatsby's number, because Fitzgerald himself would have kindly spelled it out for them. "This is a novel about the potential drawbacks to capitalism. But, and let me just say this up front, the clothes are fabulous."

In exactly that tell-all spirit, I have devised the following short quiz, which asks you to match the helpful (though radically summarized) Author's Explanation in Column A, with the appropriate work of literature in Column B.

Column A

- 1) Mrs. Rochester speaks!
- 2) One moor time.
- 3) One Moor; No Waiting.
- 4) Class struggle.
- 5) Class participation.
- 6) Mrs. Rochester shrieks!
- 7) The Gold Standard.
- 8) The Decline of Western Civilization.
- 9) The Civilization of Western Decline.

Column B

- 1) The Wizard of Oz
- 2) The Kind of Light That Shines on Texas
- 3) Othello
- 4) Jane Eyre
- 5) Babbitt
- 6) The Wizard of Oz
- 7) Howard's End
- 8) Wuthering Heights
- 9) Wide Sargasso Sea
- 10) A River Runs Through It

As fulfilling as the quiz will inevitably be, let me go on to recommend two wonderful books for summer reading, both of which offer practitioners' views of the art and craft of fiction writing. Both are essay collections by writers who will read in Emory's Creative Writing Reading Series in the 1999-2000 academic year: Charles Baxter's *Burning Down the House: Essays on Fiction*, and Frederick Busch's *A Dangerous Profession: A Book About the Writing Life*. Both are celebrations of writers and writing, but against a backdrop of concern about what is too easy, too quick, too unexamined.

Baxter, in "Dysfunctional Narratives: or: Mistakes Were Made," argues that Richard Nixon may have been the single greatest influence on contemporary American fiction over the last twenty years. Nixon invented *deniability*, Baxter says, "the almost complete disavowal of intention in relation to bad consequences." He goes on to explore the impact on fiction of this cultural phenomenon, and the essay is as dramatic in its way as the best fiction. That's true because, as in the fiction we hold and remember, the stakes are high. The issues both Baxter and Busch take up matter, because the state of our storytelling says something about the state of our humanity as the end of the twentieth century approaches.

If you're like me, when you finish the essays in Busch and Baxter's collections, you'll want to read or re-read every book they talk about. Immediately. No explanations necessary. 🌟

Recent Graduates

Christina Marie Bieber

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Advisor.

Dissertation: The Incarnational Art of Flannery O'Connor.

Rae Marie Carlton Colley

Cristine Levenduski, Advisor.

Dissertation: Domesticating the Frontier: Representations of Native Americans in U.S. Women's Prose, 1820-1885.

Kathy Panthea Kilpatrick

Martine Watson Brownley, Advisor.

Dissertation: Rage and Outrage: African-American Women Novelists in the 1970s.

Eaman Grennan appeared in the Spring issue of *Nua*.

Patricia King has accepted a position as full-time assistant professor of English at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, starting in January 2000. She is the recipient of a Dean's Teaching Fellowship for Fall 1999. Her article "Les Affiches de la Republique Espagnole: Temoignages et Ordre Symbolique Nes de la Guerre," translated by Caroline Garnier is forthcoming in *Cultures et Societe: Ordre et Desordre*. The volume is edited by Jean-Paul Barbiche and will be published in 2000 by L'Harmattan in Paris.

Diana Miles is the recipient of a Dean's Teaching Fellowship for 1999-2000.

ALUMNI NEWS

Christina Bieber ('99) has accepted a tenure-track position in American Literature at Wheaton College in Illinois.

Catherine Burroughs ('88) is currently Campbell '12 Professor of English at Wells College and a lecturer in English at Cornell University. In 1997 she published *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers* (University of Pennsylvania Press), and she has a contract with Cambridge University Press for *Women in British Romantic Theatre: Drama, Performance and Society (1790-1840)*.

Jeremy E. Cohen (M.A. '94) and his wife Kimberly announce the birth of their daughter, Kelsey Elizabeth. Jeremy joined the Tallahassee law firm of

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Knowles, Marks, & Randolph, P.A. after receiving his J.D. from Florida State University. As a civil trial lawyer, he represents personal injury plaintiffs and victims of domestic violence. His contemporary Irish poetry collection continues to grow.

Rae Carlton Colley ('98) and her husband, Will, are the proud parents of a baby girl, Grace Marie Colley.

Rebecca Finlayson ('98) and **Marshall Boswell** ('96) were married in May, 1998. Marshall is the Writer in Residence at Rhodes College and also teaches American literature. Rebecca is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the English Department at Rhodes College.

Barbara McCaskill ('88) was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor of English at the University of Georgia in Spring, 1998. In Fall 1998 she was a Fellow at the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research, Harvard University, to complete an edition of William and Ellen Craft's narrative, *Running 1,000 Miles for Freedom* (1860), published by the University of Georgia Press this spring. She is Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Womanist Studies Consortium, a Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Program that provides residential fellowships for scholars doing research on women of color. She also is active as Editor of *Womanist Theory and Research*, an interdisciplinary, biannual publication of scholarship on women of color, and as Chair of the MLA Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession. This summer she will be a Fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Columbia University.

Allen Michie ('94) will be a visiting
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Emory's Living Irish Collection

Ronald Schuchard

The recent death of Ted Hughes, Poet Laureate of England and former husband of the late American poet Sylvia Plath, and the sensational publication of Hughes's *Birthday Letters* have focused worldwide media attention on Special Collections in the Robert W. Woodruff Library, which acquired Hughes's literary archive in 1997 (See *New York Times*, 2-11-99). As I write, scholars in Special Collections are poring over his papers, which promise to shed much new light on the development of Hughes's poetry as well as his relationship with Plath. Despite the publicity, many Emory alumni and friends may not be aware that during the past twenty years the library has been building one of the most distinguished research and teaching collections of twentieth-century poetry in America. In addition to the Hughes material, the library has acquired important archives of numerous English, Irish and American authors, including W.B. Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory, Robert Penn Warren, James Dickey and others. The most striking additions, however, have been the ongoing archives of numerous contemporary Irish poets. When scholars from around the world come to Emory to work on these various collections, they often have to make room in Special Collections for "the Bloomin' Irish"—Emory students reading Irish manuscripts, and visiting Irish poets reciting poems and playing tin-whistles and flutes.

The personal archives of most writers ordinarily do not become available until years after their deaths. What makes the contemporary Irish collection at Emory unique is that all the poets whose manuscripts and correspondence comprise the "living" archive are not only alive and in their prime but still contributing papers and paying periodic visits to Emory. The collection itself is the finest and most active anywhere in the world, including the libraries and universities of Ireland, and the extraordinary relationship between the library and the poets has resulted in huge dividends for Emory students.

The Irish collection had its origins in the late 1970s, following Robert W. Woodruff's record gift of Coca-Cola stock and the appointment of Richard Ellmann, biographer of Yeats, Joyce and Wilde, as Emory's first Woodruff Professor. In 1979 Emory purchased at auction not only Lady Gregory's papers but her personal collection of books and manuscripts by W.B. Yeats. During the 1980s the library added significant collections related to the Abbey Theater, Maud Gonne, Samuel Beckett and other members of the Irish literary and dramatic movement. When Richard Ellmann died in 1987, the University established the Richard Ellmann Lectures in Modern Literature in honor of his achievement. The first Ellmann lecturer was his friend Seamus Heaney (Nobel Laureate, 1995), who donated the manuscripts of his lectures, *The Place of Writing* (1989), to the library in memory of Ellmann.

Heaney's generous gift did much to alter the scope and shape the expansion of the collection into the contemporary period. The arrival of Special Collections librarian Steve Enniss, with his gift for inspiring the confidence and trust of prospective authors, further enhanced the climate for growth, and as the 1990s progressed the library added in succession the archives of the major poets of Northern Ireland and the Republic: Michael Longley, Derek Mahon, James Simmons, Medbh McGuckian, Ciaran Carson, Paul Muldoon, Frank Ormsby, Thomas Kinsella and Peter Fallon, together with the archive of Fallon's Gallery Press, the most important literary press in Ireland since 1970. As Seamus Heaney has been a friend and teacher to most of these poets, he is substantially represented—not only in the Irish but also in the Hughes collection. Indeed, the Heaney-Hughes correspondence on poetry has been described as being of greater importance than that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. During the 1990s, these Irish poets have come to Emory to give readings, visit classes, grant student

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interviews and deposit new materials. In one year Emory classes were visited by Seamus Heaney, Eavan Boland, Ciaran Carson, Michael Longley, Medbh McGuckian, Paul Muldoon and Thomas Kinsella. The collection has created an enviable flow of visitors: the Dublin playwright Sebastian Barry read and conducted a student colloquium last fall; Galway poet Rita Ann Higgins was here in March to inaugurate Women's History Month with a reading and class visit.

The effect of this living collection on the intellectual lives of Emory students is immeasurable—from the awe of examining a major manuscript to the exhilaration of conversing with the poet they are studying. Danielle Sered, a junior in the College, enjoyed a class visit from Seamus Heaney her freshman year, began a correspondence with Heaney and arranged a special interview with him at Harvard last fall on Irish women's writing. Meanwhile, her critical essay on an extremely difficult volume by Medbh McGuckian, *Captain Lavender*, won second place and \$1000 in the W.W. Norton national undergraduate essay contest. McGuckian was so impressed by the essay that she granted Danielle a special interview on the volume when she came to read at Emory. Danielle has studied, met and conversed with all the Irish writers who have come to Emory since she arrived. She was recently awarded one of the College's new International Study Awards to research her senior honors thesis on women's writing in Ireland this summer, and Rita Ann Higgins has invited her to stay in her home when she visits Galway. With the interest and assistance of Emory's Irish writers, Danielle has scheduled interviews with women poets and editors that could not have been arranged otherwise. Graduate students Brian Cliff, Brendan Corcoran, Gavin Drummond and Leigh Partington, presently writing doctoral dissertations on Irish authors, have astonished audiences at professional meetings with revelations and quotations from the archives in their presentations. Beginning next fall, Emory students will be able to study for a semester or a year at the top four Irish universities—in Belfast (Queen's), Dublin (UCD, TCD) and Galway (UCG)—and we hope to establish an Irish Studies program in future. Yes, Irish literature and culture are very much alive and well at Emory: please visit the website, www.emory.edu/LIB/schome.html and ask the English Department to put you on a mailing list for future readings. 🌟

From the Chair: "Discussing" Literature

Bill Gruber

Each year at this time a large box arrives not so mysteriously in my office. The box contains the evaluations from students who have taken our courses, and it's the responsibility of the chair to read this inundation of literature commenting on all the faculty and a good number of graduate students who teach in our department. It's a time-consuming task to read hand-written commentaries on the hundred-odd courses we offer each year, but it's a task I've come to value for all that. We are on the whole excellent teachers, if students' evaluations are any indication. Numbers on the College "bubble sheets" are high, and hundreds of students each semester tell our faculty and teaching assistants how much they enjoyed the time they spent in our company. One of the things they most enjoy, it turns out, is "discussions" of literature. Our classes are rich in what we like to call "discussion," a concept in the teaching of literature that over the last ten years has acquired the pull of a religion.

It's a funny thing about "discussion." Everything about the concept seems to be good for education, but it sometimes strikes me as a little too democratic an idea for what is essen-

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assistant professor at Wake Forest University beginning this fall.

Andrew Silver's ('97) book *Blackface/Whiteface: Southern Humor and Cultural Crisis, 1830-1930* has been accepted for publication by Louisiana State University Press. His essay, "Making Minstrelsy of Murder: George Washington Harris, the KKK, and the Reconstruction Aesthetic of Black Frigate," will appear in the 25th anniversary edition of *PROSPECTS: A Journal of American Cultural Studies*.

FACULTY NEWS

Mark Bauerlein published review articles in *Emory Report*, *Walt Whitman Quarterly*, *Philosophy and Literature*, *The Skeptical Inquirer*, and *boundary2*. He is spending the summer in the Loire Valley.

Frances Smith Foster was named the Phi Beta Kappa 25th Anniversary Lecturer for the Nu Chapter of San Diego State University. She gave a talk on the War over Slavery's Narratives and was honored at the initiation banquet. She was also appointed the official delegate for the Modern Language Association to the Federation Internationale des Langues et Litteratures Modernes Conference meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe. She will deliver one of the keynote addresses on July 26, 1999.

Xuefei Jin's poems, under the pen name Ha Jin, have appeared in *Manoa*, *New Letters*, and *Shenandoah*. Xuefei has also received a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1999 to complete a novel in progress.

Christopher Lane was commissioned to write an essay for the *Henry James*

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tially the undemocratic space of the classroom. The best class I had as an undergraduate was a class in which I said only one word. Literally. Here is how it was.

The class was called Aspects of Fiction. It was a “seminar” of fifteen people, and it was taught by Robert Penn Warren, the poet and novelist. The first day of the class we all sat in thrall as Warren talked, apparently spontaneously, about the first two paragraphs of Ernest Hemingway’s novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. Warren talked for two hours about seven sentences (I just now went back and counted them), about imagery and prose rhythms and parataxis and narrative voice and something he called their “drift of import,” and none of the rest of us said anything. By the time the class was over two hours later I had filled the margins of my text with Warren’s words. Who cared what I thought? It was like being in the presence of an angel. I sat in awe and listened and wrote down what he said. We were not students, we were disciples. We saw Art, Beauty, Truth.

Most of the rest of the semester was like that first day of class. After a couple of weeks all of us were convinced Warren had read and committed to memory every poem and story in Western literary history. That was the simple pedagogy of English 66, Aspects of Fiction: Warren talked, and I listened.

Except once. “The book by Oswald Spengler,” Warren started to say one day. “The . . .” And then he stopped cold. Robert Penn Warren could not remember the title of Spengler’s book. We were amazed, all fifteen of us. In a class where we had got used to what seemed like Warren’s total recall of every book ever written, this moment of forgetfulness was without precedent. *What? A book he hasn’t memorized?* The stillness was deep and full of apprehension, and none of us knew what to do. So we waited during what Samuel Beckett would have called “a good pause.” Then Robert Penn Warren tried again. “You know, what’s it called, ‘The, the—going down?—of the West.’”

“Decline,” I said. It made me feel proud to be there to help him out. But it made me feel bogus too. My word was just filler, and I knew it; it was a good deal like the air in whipped margarine.

“Decline,” Warren repeated in acknowledgment. Then he resumed his monologue about the state of contemporary fiction, and I said nothing for the rest of the term.

That was the extent of the “discussion” I remember from English 66, Aspects of Fiction. Lest I give a false report, I should admit that other students that semester said more. But not much more. Whether or not we had opinions of our own about the novels we read, I don’t know. Probably some of us did. But I do know that none of us ever felt disenfranchised because we were not able to discuss those opinions with Warren.

It’s a story I like to tell, the time I helped one of the most famous American poets and novelists of the twentieth century find the right word. But I would have to say also that it may not be entirely accidental that the class from which I learned most as an undergraduate was the one in which I said least. Looking back, I think I should have said even less. It’s the curmudgeon in me, probably. 🌧️

Winners of the English Department and Creative Writing Awards

English Department’s Annual Competition for Best Essay by an Emory Student:
Brendan Corcoran “On the Production of Keats’ Posthuman Poetics”

Academy of American Poets Prize for Best Poetry Written by an Emory Student:
Brendan Corcoran “Crossing Waters”

Honorable Mention:
Connie Monson “When She Turns Fifty”

Review, his essay, on inscrutability in *The Golden Bowl*, *The Notebooks*, and two recent biographies of James, will appear in the fall issue. Lane’s essay on Michel Foucault—a critique of his philosophy and literary criticism—has been accepted for publication in a collection of essays forthcoming from the University of Pennsylvania Press.

James Morey is participating in the Culpeper/Center for Teaching and Curriculum Seminar this summer. **Jim has won a one-month fellowship to study at the Beinecke Library in spring, 2000.** His review of Thomas Usk’s *Testament of Love* has just appeared in *The Medieval Review*.

Catherine Nickerson is one of three Emory recipients of the 1999 Award for Excellence in Teaching, presented by the Center for Teaching and Curriculum.

Sally Wolff King and **Nagueyalti Warren**, both Associate Deans of Emory College, have co-edited a collection of essays, *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women’s Writing*, to be published by LSU Press in the fall. Deans Wolff and Warren have also co-authored “‘Like the Pupil of an Eye’: Sexual Blinding in the Works of Alice Walker.” The essay appeared in *The Southern Literary Journal* in 1998 and will be reprinted in a special volume on women’s writing next year. Sally’s recent interview with Eudora Welty will appear in the *South Atlantic Review* this summer. A companion interview with William Maxwell will accompany it. Recently Sally presented “The Geography of Faulkner’s Landscape” at the Southern Cultures Conference and “Faulkner’s Places” at Waycross College. Sally is also scheduled to lead a two-week, National Faculty-sponsored summer institute for teachers at Oxford Mississippi this June.