



# Reading Matters

## The Department of English

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### From (the Edge of) the Chair's Seat

The warmth and energy of EPB in this first week of the spring semester certainly makes for a relief from the frigid temperatures and barren landscape outside our windows. Welcome back.

Winter break was relaxing, I hope, but no doubt also filled with activity as many of us traveled for research, worked on scholarly and creative projects, taught in the winter session here (**Tom Simmons**) or abroad (**Robin Hemley** and **Bonnie Sunstein**) and planned spring classes, as well as attended professional meetings. At our field's most prominent gathering, the annual Modern Language Association conference held this year in Boston in early January, eleven faculty from the department delivered papers, and also chaired sessions, went to business meetings, and participated in workshops. All of that effort—by **Florence Boos, Blaine Greteman, Lena Hill, Michael Hill, Kathy Lavezzo, Horace Porter, Jeff Porter, Phillip Round, Harry Stecopoulos, Miriam Thaggert, and Stephen Voyce**--showcases especially well the visibility and energy of our faculty.

Also at MLA, some of our graduate students had job interviews and now will be going to on-campus visits, girded by the advice of the Placement Committee, so capably chaired this year by **Adam Hooks**, with the assistance of **Laura Rigal, Harry Stecopoulos, and Garrett Stewart**.

Interesting reading in this context is an article by Chase F. Robinson, professor of history and provost of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, in *Inside Higher Ed*, on December 11, 2012. The gist of Robinson's argument is that we face not a crisis in humanities PhD training, but a crisis in the academic job market. Data show high levels of satisfaction by recent PhDs with their programs and three years after finishing their degrees about 94 percent of humanities PhDs report being employed. At the same time, the academic job market is experiencing—as many of our students have witnessed first-hand--the identical problems of increased “casualization” and job insecurity that vex the globalizing workplace. Please offer our graduate students all the support you can as they navigate a job market that reflects these broader trends of declining lifelong (or long-term) employment across all parts of the labor force.

The same *Inside Higher Ed* article notes that the humanities show no lack of appeal for undergraduates and if EPB feels full, it's because the semester has started with some 1623 undergraduates enrolled in 68 English literature and writing classes, plus 1707 students in 96 General Education in Literature classes. That's a lot of enthusiasm for all things literary!

We're joined this semester by three newly arrived international visitors and one who is continuing from the fall: Fan Dai, professor at Sun Yat-Sen University, China; Vincent Dussol, professor at Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier, France; Walter Grunzweig, professor and chair of American Studies at the University of Dortmund; and Missa Yook, associate professor at Kookmin University, South Korea. You can see their photos and read brief profiles on our departmental website (look under "Faculty," "Visiting Faculty"). In a flight of reverse migration, **Jon Wilcox** is spending the semester teaching in Montpellier as the faculty member from our side of the French-American exchange.

An important event to mark on your spring calendar is the visit of the new dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Chaden Djalali. Dean Djalali will be meeting with the full-time faculty and permanent lecturers on Thursday, February 14. I'll send out full details and a formal invitation shortly before his visit.

We also have a slate of faculty colloquia—with talks and readings by **Robyn Schiff**, **Bluford Adams**, and **Brooks Landon**—to look forward to, thanks to the deft organizational work of **Kevin Kopelson**.

In the meantime and as we anticipate those and other upcoming events, let me offer you my best wishes for a good start to the semester. My DEO hours will once again be M-F 1-5 and my door is always open should you want to see me.

## **Publications, Presentations and other Faculty Matters**

**Loren Glass** presented a lecture titled "Counter-Culture Colophon: Grove Press, the Evergreen Review and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde" at Syracuse University in early January. More information can be found [here](#).

**Blaine Greteman** has an essay titled "'Oh My Simplicity': Revising Childhood in Milton's *Ludlow Mask*" in the recently released book *Young Milton: The Emerging Author, 1620-42*, ed. Edward Jones (Oxford University Press, 2013). Blaine also recently became a contributor at the Stanford Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies blog which can be found [here](#).

**Mark Isham** illustrated "Graphic Note-Taking" for the University of Iowa's 4CAST Technology Seminar on January 17. The 4CAST '13 website will soon post graphic notes by Mark taken during the seminar. "Graphic, or visual note-taking is a method of recording information using visual elements that extend beyond the simple, linear placement of text. Graphic notes can enhance

comprehension by presenting information in an interesting and lively form that is both informative and easy to understand.”

**Kevin Kopelson** has a piece in the “Christmas Issue” of the *London Review of Books* which can be found [here](#). The title, “I want to be her clothes”, was the invention of the LRB editors. Kevin had suggested, for a title, either “Think Pink” or “Crap-Town Slag.”

The Obermann website features an article on **Judith Pascoe** and her book *The Sarah Siddons Audio Files*. Click [here](#) to read more.

**Phil Round** has been awarded the 2013-14 May Brodbeck Humanities Fellowship to support travel and other research expenses for his current book project on American Indian book history. Congratulations Phil!

**Miriam Thaggert’s** essay, “Marriage, Moynihan, *Mahogany*: Success and the Post-Civil Rights Black Female Professional in Film” was published in the December, 2012 issue of **American Quarterly**. A version of the paper was also presented as part of the MLA panel, “Black Feminist Theory in the Age of Michelle Obama.” Click [here](#) to read the essay.

## **Center for Teaching Matters**

The Center for Teaching has a new lineup of spring 2013 semester workshops scheduled covering topics from “Making Learning Materials More Accessible” to “Becoming a Future Professor Today”. These workshops are open to faculty members, instructional staff and TAs. Click [here](#) for the schedule and more details.

## **Facebook**

The English Department is on Facebook! Go to <http://www.facebook.com/lowaEnglish> and “Like” the department.

## **Other Calendars**

[UI Master Calendar](#) | [UI Academic Calendar](#) | [The Writers' Workshop Calendar](#)  
[The International Writing Program Calendar](#) | [The Writing University Calendar](#)

## **Future Issue**

The next issue of Reading Matters will be on February 14. Please send submissions for the next issue by 5:00pm on Wednesday, February 13 to [Erin Hackathorn](#).