

Cheers From the Chair

Over the summer EPB is a quiet place, except for the occasional student who dragged her parents 50 or 1,500 miles because she wanted to learn more about the department. She's heard we teach writing, and she wants to do that. And she agrees enthusiastically that good writers must be serious readers (she's packed several books for the trip). Such moments run counter to almost every narrative we hear about education, about "Generation Z," and about the humanities. And it's truly inspiring when those same students show up in our classes in early fall, taking the plunge and putting their faith in us to teach them well.

This year, I feel like I'm right there with them in my freshman year as DEO, going through endless orientations, picking up my new textbooks (the Provost's office gives new DEOs an ill-omened one called *Difficult Conversations*) and trying to get all my homework done. Speaking of: my first assignment is...the traditional icebreaker! This year, we're thrilled to welcome Tisa Bryant and Sarah Minor as Assistant Professors of English, both in nonfiction writing. Please also join me in welcoming our Collegiate Visiting Writers: Hannah Piette (poetry), Ikram Basra (playwriting), Elaine Musiwa (fiction), and Wyatt Williams (nonfiction). Tommy Miray Lopez joins us as a Visiting Assistant Professor. We also have new staff: Sanjna Singh has been instrumental in getting the beautiful new Nonfiction Writing building up and running, while Kelly Riessen, our new accountant, joined the EPB team in April.

It's already shaping up to be an amazing year, with a world-class lecture series, "The Fate of Professional Reading," a visit from Ida Beam Visiting Professor and Pulitzer prize winner Jane Smiley (October 5-6), and more talks, readings, and events every day. There are too many to list, but you can find them [all on our spiffy new website and calendar](#).

Welcome to the fall semester!

Blaine

GEL Matters

We welcomed eighteen new instructors to the GEL Orientation and Colloquium this semester. Soon they will be receiving class visits from their Program Associates, as well as their Faculty Advisors. (Thanks to the English faculty who are serving in this important mentoring role!) GEL projects this semester include meeting with IMU administrators to improve communication with the Hawkshop and exploring options for staffing GEL sections in the coming years. I am always grateful for your suggestions for improving the program, so please keep them coming!

Bluford Adams

Undergraduate Matters

Undergraduate Studies is thriving. At 915 majors, we may be the largest combined English major (English and English and Creative Writing) in the US, if not the world. We're certainly the biggest in the Big Ten. In an era of declining humanities enrollment, our numbers warrant celebration. But the quality of our instruction is still more impressive. Iowa's undergraduate writing programs rank 2nd in the nation, in large part due to the top-notch teaching of English department graduate students and faculty. We deliver an elite education at public school prices, and we do so despite a loss of tenure-track lines and a limited budget. Little wonder, then, that we attract wonderful young scholar-writers from all over the world. Eager to interpret and create, they know that Iowa English is leading the way to a 21st century version of literary studies, and they're excited to be part of the change.

Harry Stecopoulos

Non-Fiction Matters

This year The Nonfiction Writing Program admitted just 4% of applicants to its MFA program, the lowest rate nationwide among nonfiction program. The NWP's new students hail from India, Ireland, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, and are joining the program from a wide range of fields, including journalism, publishing, podcasting, teaching, the sciences, and law.

The year the program has also welcomed two new permanent members to its faculty. Tisa Bryant joined the faculty from the California Institute of the Arts, and is the author of the acclaimed book *Unexplained Presence* and editor of the wildly popular 3-volume *Encyclopedia* anthology series. Sarah Minor joined the faculty from the Cleveland Institute of Art, and is the author of the excellent and award-winning books *Slim Confessions* and *Bright Archive*. They are joining faculty members Melissa Febos, Inara Verzemnieks, Bonnie Sunstein, and John D'Agata, as well as the NWP's annual Bedel Distinguished Visiting Professor, the esteemed essayist and poet Paisely Rekdal.

This academic year also marks the NWP's first year in its brand-new building—a multi-million-dollar facility built on the corner of Clinton and Church Streets in Iowa City, directly across the street from the Writers' Workshop and the President's residence. The building, which was constructed and outfitted entirely with private donations, has been in the works since 2008. Nearly 70% of the NWP's alumni contributed to the building's fundraising campaign, and over 50 alumni will be returning to campus to participate in its dedication.

Among the new building's many features are two large and sunny seminar rooms, faculty and TA offices, a lounge and library with houses books by NWP alumni, and a state-of-the-art Digital Storytelling Lab, equipped with a recording studio, video and audio recording equipment, editing software, and much more. The building also boasts an outdoor garden and a seating area, which has been dedicated to the memory of the program's founder, Carl Klaus.

John D'Agata

Faculty Matters

Kaveh Akbar received a book subvention for the publication of *Martyr!*, forthcoming from Knopf.

Florence Boos edited a collection of essays titled, *William Morris on Socialism: Uncollected Essays*. It will be available later this month. You can [pre-order your copy online](#) through the Edinburgh University Press website.

Melissa Febos published a review for *The New Yorker* of Claire Dederer's nonfiction book *Monster's: A Fan's Dilemma*. She also published an essay about the recent film adaptation of Judy Blume's 1970 novel, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* in the *New York Review of Books*.

Elizabeth Rodriguez Fielder received a book subvention for the publication of *The Revolution Will Be Improvised: The Intimacy of Cultural Activism*, forthcoming from University of Michigan Press

To discover why New York City is in Iowa, see the latest co-authored essay by Michael Gavin and **Eric Gidal**, "[Geospatial Semantics: A Textual Perspective](#)," part of a forum on "Thinking Space" in the latest issue (9.2) of *Literary Geographies* (online and open access).

Blaine Greteman and **Lauren Haldeman** have started a new podcast, Writing Matters, hosted by the Writing University. You can find it here <https://writinguniversity.org/writing-matters-podcast> or through the Apple podcast app.

Sarah Minor contributed two critical essays to an exhibition catalogue featuring the work of the University of Iowa's 2023 Grant Wood Fellows Johanna Winters and Michael Dixon. She has new essays in *The Columbia Review* and forthcoming in *Gulf Coast*.

Sarah Minor and **Lynne Nugent** were awarded a grant of \$14,000 from the FACE Foundation to support an in-person exchange between Iowa's NWP program and the University of Paris 8 in Spring 2024. The exchange will support a collaborative project between Paris 8 and NWP students to create nonfiction podcasts for a global audience.

Harry Stecopoulos was recently appointed to the editorial board of The Faulkner Journal. In early August, he published "B-Sides: Joyce Carol Oates' them" in Public Books. In late August, he published "Ralph Ellison as Literary Ambassador" in Literary Hub.

Graduate Student Matters

Hannah Bonner has published book reviews in the [Los Angeles Review of Books](#) and film criticism in [Lit Hub](#) and in Open City Documentary Film Festival's [catalogue](#).

Emeritus Matters

Patricia Foster's new book of linked essays, *Written in the Sky: Lessons of a Southern Daughter*, will be published on September 26th, 2023 with a book launch at Prairie Lights Bookstore (in conversation with Darius Stewart) on September 28th. She will give an Emeritus Faculty reading/lecture on October 5th and will be a visiting writer at Fairmont State College in mid-September and mid-October. She will also do readings and teach workshops at Auburn University, University of Alabama, Troy State University, Pensacola State College, the Pat Conroy Literary Center, and Page & Palette Bookstore. In late November, she will participate in the Southern Writers Reading Series. New essays are forthcoming in *The Examined Life* and two anthologies.

John Huntley, a longtime English Department faculty member, died in Colorado Springs on July 9. John joined the English faculty in 1957, after a stint in the Navy during World War II. He retired in 1996. Among his many accomplishments at Iowa were creating the "Writing for the Sciences" course, teaching the university's first African American Literature course, chairing the Mississippi Support Project to bus volunteers to Mississippi during Freedom Summer to support voter registration, and helping to create the University of Iowa sailing club. You'll find a picture of him, in sailor's cap, on the wall of fame and notoriety in EPB 331. Read his complete [obituary](#).

Alumni Matters

Gail Hanlon (former student of Florence Boos in the 1970's) has published a book of poetry, *Silent Letter*, at Cornerstone Press.

Former U of I student (Philosophy major with a minor in Af-Am Studies) **Melina Hegelheimer** (Class of 2023), worked with **Tara Bynum** from summer 2021 through fall 2022 with the help and generous support of DTD funds and Early Career Award funding, to create [this podcast/article](#).

Carla Perry (70BA) received the Soapstone Bread & Roses Lifetime Achievement Award in Portland, Oregon.

Marija Reiff (PhD 2018) is now Assistant Professor of 19th-Century British Literature at Jacksonville State University.

Michael Rovner (Class of 1992), along with three industry business partners, have launched Tiny, a creative advertising agency in NY and LA. Their simple pitch is every big idea starts with a tiny team.

Angela Warfield (PhD 2009) is a professor at St. Louis Community College and Owner and Principal Consultant at Compass Academics.

UI English alums, [please let us know about your career](#).

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