

Reading Matters

Vol. 16, Issue 5, November 18, 2010

From (the Edge of) the Chair's Seat

Before classrooms empty and office doors close for the upcoming thanksgiving break, let me take this occasion to catch you up on a few items of interest, in no particular order, it being that time of the semester at which attempts at order are probably best abandoned.

To begin with the omnipresent subject of money, a recent issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (November 5, 2010) reports on tuition rates at colleges and universities across the US, with good news for us. Even with the tuition hikes of the past few years, the University of Iowa continues to offer a lot of bang for the buck, with in-state annual tuition and fees for 2010-11 of \$7,417 (nearly a thousand dollars under than the \$8,331 cost of room and board) and out-of-state rates of \$23,713. That's considerably less than rates charged by the priciest private schools, at which total costs now top \$50,000, and cheaper than many public institutions.

The appealing cost-benefit ratio behind our tuition rates may get a boost from the recent vote in the November 2 local elections against repealing the 21-only bar law, which, with luck, might lose us our place on the top-ten party-schools list. Even if we can't shake that dubious distinction, the vote can only help the university's academic reputation, not to mention the intellectual experience of our students.

Speaking of the undergraduate experience, the "Pizza with Your Professor" series sponsored by the undergraduate English Society continues to get rave reviews, with sessions now by our distinguished colleagues Steve Kuusisto, Teresa Mangum, and David Hamilton. On a related note, it was pleasing to see undergraduates in the audience at recent talks by Phil Round and Lori Branch, as well as at readings during the Bedell NonfictioNow conference, which by all accounts was a smashing success. How good to be immersed in so much scholarly and creative energy and to know that our majors are taking advantage of what's on offer outside the classroom.

As for upcoming activities, mark your calendars for Monday, December 6, when we will welcome new majors to the department, while congratulating December graduates. Because many of our new majors will by then be on the verge of completing the initiation rite known as the Introduction to the English Major (008:005), the welcome ceremony will begin at 8:00 a.m. outside their classroom, Shambaugh Auditorium, with coffee and pastries. Feel free to drop by if you are an early riser, but plan especially to come to the main ceremony in the Gerber Lounge

later that day, when from 11:30-1:00 new and departing majors will be eager to meet faculty and one another. Many thanks to Barbara Eckstein and Lori Branch, with assistance from Erin Hackathorn, for providing the organizational genius that brings us this event.

Thinking further ahead and to less festive occasions, be sure to check your Final Exam room and time assignment, which can be found on the [Office of the Registrar's website](#) on the "Faculty/Staff" main menu tab under the embedded headings "Exam Information," "Final Exam Schedule and Information," and (finally) "Final Exam Schedule."

Lastly, to shift to graduate matters, the Graduate College has now posted statistics about the university's Ph.D. programs on a site intended to respond to the recent NIH mandate for training grant applications, the NRC Survey, and recommendations made by the Task Force on Graduate Education. Faculty as well as current and prospective students can access the site, titled "PhD Program Data," [here](#).

Best wishes for a relaxing break that will invigorate us for the remaining weeks of the semester!

Publications, Presentations, and other Faculty Matters

Click [here](#) to read the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* review of **David Dowling's** book *Chasing the White Whale*.

"The Browning of the Midwest: Latino Immigrants in the Heartland," to be directed by **Claire Fox**, Omar Valerio-Jimenez (History), and Santiago Vaquera Vasquez (Spanish and Portuguese), has been selected as the 2012-2013 Obermann Center Humanities Symposium. Congratulations to Claire!

Jeff Porter's essay, "Samuel Beckett and the Radiophonic Body," appears in the Winter 2010 issue of *Modern Drama* (53.4): 431-46.

Alumni Matters

Joanne Janssen (PhD 2010) has a [column](#) in the recent *Inside Higher Ed* on her experience interviewing for, and getting, an international job.

Facebook Matters

The English Department is on Facebook! Go to <http://www.facebook.com/IowaEnglish> to become a "fan" of the Department.

Other Calendars

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

Future Issues

The next issue of Reading Matters will be on **Thursday, December 9**. Please send submissions for the next issue by 5 p.m. on **Wednesday, December 8** to [Erin Hackathorn](#).