



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

San José State University
Spring 2006

Contents:

Lurie Chair Houston: The Visiting Professor by Dareth Pray	1
The Honors Program by Sara Scovil	2
SJSU says "Farewell" to Professor Keesey by Stefanie Chase	3
The English Society by Katie Masters	4
The Credential Program by Fathima Kaleel	5
Encore: Alum Returns to Sender by Rey San Juan III	6
Scholarships & Awards by Ingrid Starink	7
The Art of Epistolary: Two New Editions by Delilah Gallardo	8
Shillinglaw's Journey into Steinbeck Country by Rachel Haigh	9
Tapping into Meaning by Daniel Figueroa	10
Fall 2006 Course Descriptions	11
The Chair's Message	16

Lurie Chair James D. Houston: The Visiting Professor

by Dareth Pray

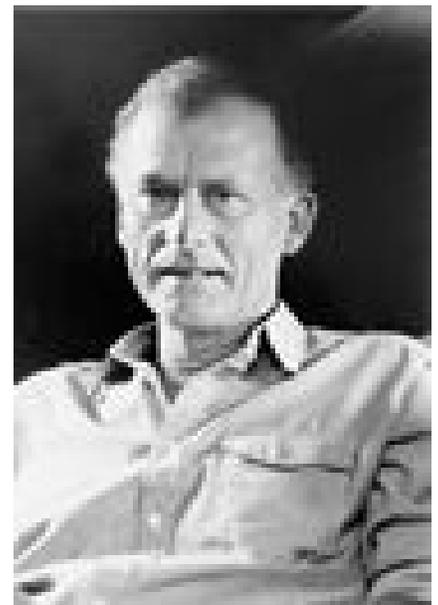
"Delightful" was the word James D. Houston used to describe his return to San José State. This semester's Lurie Chair, Houston is a graduate of SJSU's Drama Department, where he took classes in 124 Hugh Gillis Hall, the same room in which he currently teaches.

Houston is a well-respected award-winning author of both fiction and non-fiction. His works of fiction include *Continental Drift*, *A Native Son of the Golden West*, and his latest novel, *Snow Mountain Passage*, which chronicles the experiences of one family in the Donner party. He is equally prolific in non-fiction, writing *In the Ring of Fire: A Pacific Basin Journey*, *Californians: Searching for the Golden State*, and *Farewell to Manzanar*, which he co-wrote with his wife, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, a well regarded author in her own right. Houston has just completed a novel and is currently co-editing an anthology of California Literature with Jack Hicks, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Al Young. Volume one was published in December 2000 by the University of California Press, and volume two is expected to be published in 2007.

As our Distinguished Visiting Professor of Spring '06, Houston is teaching two classes: one undergraduate literature course, English 166: American Literature Since 1945; and English 241, a graduate seminar in fiction writing. Students in Houston's literature course have the opportunity to benefit from his expertise in California literature since he has chosen the literary tradition of our state as the class' focus. Readings include Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*, Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and See's *Golden Days*.

What Houston hopes his students will take away from his course is a larger sense of the relationship between who we are and where we live. To this end, he introduces his students to some defining characteristics and chapters of California literature such as the Beat Generation, the California Detective Novel, the Prose of the Apocalypse, the

(continued on page 2)



Crossroads Culture, and the important presence of ethnic voices.

For students in his writing workshop, he hopes that each will feel “empowered to take the next step, whatever that needs to be,” to continue along their paths as writers.

Houston’s personal teaching style, as his students (myself included) can attest, hinges on fostering a dialogue and a sense of community between fellow literature and writing enthusiasts. Houston calls exploring ideas about literature and fiction in a classroom setting “stimulating.” One of his favorite aspects of teaching, he says, is getting students to share in his excitement about literature and his passion for crafting stories.

And it seems that Houston has accomplished this goal. Students are raving about Professor Houston: he is “approachable,” “very knowledgeable,” “receptive to students’ ideas,” and “genuine.” One student says her favorite thing about Professor Houston is how “he smiles genuinely at every single person when he calls roll.” Other students praise the relaxed yet intellectual atmosphere he creates in class: “he is a good facilitator—he provides feedback without dominating the discussion”; “students feel encouraged to participate”; “he listens and connects with people.” One student calls his literature course, “one of the best classes I’ve ever taken!” Unanimously, students feel motivated to share their ideas, and they appreciate Houston’s talent for sparking discussion and helping students develop their analyses. “He is open to all interpretations, as long as they can be backed up with logical reasons,” says another student.

Students of SJSU are very lucky to have the opportunity to learn from the expertise of James D. Houston this semester. In addition to his classes, Houston will conduct “A Conversation with James D. Houston” at noon and a reading of his work at 7:30 pm April 13, 2006 in the Martin Luther King Jr. Library, 2nd Floor Meeting Rooms 225-229 as part of the CLA’s Major Authors Series.

For more information about Houston’s life and work, browse his official website at www.jamesdhouston.com.



The Honors Program

by Sara Scovil

Are you looking for a class experience that embraces less mainstream topics? The English Department Honors Program offers students a chance to challenge themselves with diverse and unique subjects.

Offered every fall, there are two courses available for students with a 3.5 GPA in the English major and a 3.0 GPA overall. English 190 offers a specific topic of concentration each fall semester for both juniors and seniors. There are no tests, but a seminar paper is due at the end of the semester. The classes are smaller than most (about 20 people), fostering dynamic, in-depth discussions. Honors student Ben Dondero feels one of the advantages of taking an honors course is that with a smaller class size students not only learn more, but also enjoy “a more personal relationship” with their instructor and fellow students. Last fall’s English 190 dealt with Arthurian Literature; this fall’s will be Satire in Literature taught by Professor Persis Karim. The course will look at both classic and current forms of satire, from *Gulliver’s Travels* to *The Daily Show*.

The Honors option is also available through individual study in English 191, which provides a great alternative for students who have a scheduling conflict with English 190. Students with senior standing can have a faculty member sponsor them with a personally chosen topic of interest. Not only do students get to pick a theme that specifically interests and motivates them, but they can also work at their own pace with the guidance of their faculty sponsor.

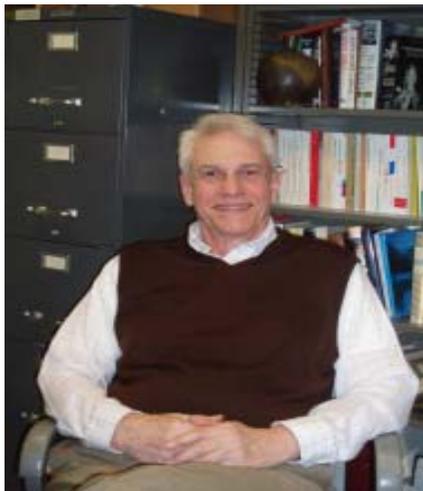
If you are interested in thought-provoking themes and a chance to dig deeper into intriguing subjects, contact the English Department Honors Advisor, Professor Andy Fleck via email at afleck@email.sjsu.edu.

Learn What’s Going on in the Department

To receive information about department activities via email, join the English Society’s List Server. To join, send an email message to this address: listproc@listproc.sjsu.edu. In the body of the text, type this: SUBSCRIBE EngDept [your first name] [your last name]. You will receive an automatic reply acknowledging your successful subscription and explaining how to unsubscribe any time you wish.

SJSU Says “Farewell” to Professor Keeseey

by Stefanie Chase



Don Keeseey has been a well-known professor to students in the English Department at San José State University for the past 39 years. Even some current SJSU English professors have had the pleasure of learning a few things from Professor Keeseey

when they were students. Unfortunately, because he has chosen to retire, this will be the last semester students can benefit from Professor Keeseey’s expertise in 18th-century British literature, classics in translation, and literary theory, among other subjects.

After teaching at Michigan State University and Wisconsin in Milwaukee, Professor Keeseey came to SJSU in 1965 and has stayed here ever since. Over the years, he has taught courses, too many to name, in fact, not only in the English Department, but also in the Humanities Honors Program.

One of his favorite courses to teach is the seminar in “Modern Approaches to Literature.” He enjoys this class not only for the content, but also for its intimacy. Professor Keeseey feels the seminar format is ideal for the content of the course. What he will miss most, though, are his conversations with students who are passionate about literature. For him, these are mostly older first-generation college students who have a special appreciation for the subject. He will remember these discussions as among his fondest memories of the university.

Because of the time period he began teaching at SJSU (in the late sixties), Professor Keeseey recalls the beginning of his career here as a “lively” time, characterized by war riots, tear gas, and student strikes. Reflecting on the changes he has seen the campus undergo through the years, he notes that “the last 33 years have been comparatively peaceful.” Overall, he describes his time at SJSU as a good experience, and he feels extremely grateful he had the opportunity to teach here: “[It’s a] good place to work...[a] good place to teach.”

After he retires, Professor Keeseey plans to spend his time traveling, maybe to Europe. He will also “explore some avenues of writing,” as well as continue to work on the history of literary criticism and theory. He is not sure whether he will publish anything, but he may release the fifth edition of *Contexts for Criticism*, a work in which he uses the basics of literary interpretation to examine other authors’ works.

We all wish him well!

Changes in Advanced G.E. Policy

Students who began continuous enrollment in or after Fall ‘05 must use courses from three separate departments to satisfy Advanced General Education Areas R, S, and V. In other words, “new” students may use either English 169 or 174 to satisfy Area S, or 117 or 127 to satisfy Area V, but they cannot use more than one of these four courses to double count for the major and Advanced G.E. Students who enrolled prior to Fall ‘05 may continue to use two major courses to satisfy Area S and V requirements. Students should see the department advisor, Professor Pollock, once per semester just to check on their progress toward graduation. Sign up for an appointment time in FO 102.

The English Society

by Katie Masters

“Random Chuck Norris fact,” I hear as I arrive at the English Society (ES) Lounge after class. I pause at the door to listen. The young man continues, as a group of students half-listens, “Did you know that Chuck’s beard was the inspiration for the Swiss Army Knife?”

The listeners give varied responses; there is a mixture of laughter and groans, such as “That was lame!” and “Boo!”

I take a seat on the couch among my friends and try to pick up on the conversation. That is one of many things I like about the ES: you never know what discussion will be taking place. You can bet that it will be random, though, either highly intellectual or borderline ridiculous.

Located in the Faculty Office Building room 113, the ES Lounge is a “hang out room” for English majors, minors, and graduate students, but other majors are welcome to “hang out” as well. Philosophy and Criminal Justice majors, for instance, are often there as well, happily ensconced among the the literature buffs. It is a place to relax between classes, study and research, joke with one another, and take the stress out of the school day. At times, the room is buzzing with students’ voices and laughter; at other times there is but one other person quietly studying or sleeping. The atmosphere of the room varies as much as the personalities that make use of it.

“This is the room where I pretend to do homework,” jokes Richard Webb, an English major graduating this May.

“Which is a problem because he stops the rest of us from getting our work done,” adds Mary Williams, another graduating English major.

As I listen to the ongoing discussion about the all-important American icon, Chuck Norris, I think about how many of these students I have met through the ES. I have courses with many of them, but with our busy and varied schedules, and the impersonal vibe of this mostly commuter school, it is hard to get to know your classmates.

“The ES is the only thing that keeps us from going straight from class and immediately home,” says graduate student Rob Swart. The room is more than just a break from classes, however. We give, and receive, insight on classes, instructors, assignments, and our futures.

“You get help here,” says Swart. “Help on papers, debates on literature...movies,” he throws in.

English major Michael Shannon adds, “Meaning-

ful existential debate exists within these walls. Witty, rhetorical comments, and lots of laughter.”

“I can advertise my rugby team here,” jokes senior and soon-to-be graduate Ben Dondero.

Students are both friends and tutors here. We care about school, the next step, and impressing our professors, whom we see not only as instructors, but also as mentors. The lounge is located among our professors’ offices, which allows us to develop stronger relationships with them. Professors come by to chat with us often or poke their heads in to say, “Hi.” We get to see that they are human and they, too, were once where we are now.

The ES, in fact, recognizes annually a professor who goes beyond the call of duty and gives an exemplary performance throughout the academic year. The James Joyce Distinguished Professor Award is presented to one English Department professor based on student nominations.

Michelle Perry, a senior English major, is on the committee that decides the winner of the award.

“We look for specific examples of what makes this professor unique. How exactly has he or she had a positive impact on the students?” Perry asks. The committee doesn’t want general statements like, “She’s a great teacher!” or “He is so funny!” It wants to see passionate letters because the award is given for passionate teaching.

To nominate a professor for this year’s award, submit five (5) copies of the letter of recommendation with your name, student identification number, and contact information to the English Society mailbox located in the English Department Office’s mailroom (FO 102). The deadline to submit nominations is April 3rd. Last year’s winner, Professor Linda Mitchell, says of the award, “I was humbled. I never thought in a million years that I would be picked.” Students can see a good example of a recommendation by dropping by the ES Lounge. Professor Mitchell’s recommendation, accompanied by her picture, is framed outside the door.

The ES does more than give this annual award, however. Over the past couple of years, the members have held on-campus readings, English Department teas, and lectures. Last year students conducted a reading of Grimms’ Fairy Tales at the Student Union for other students and the community. Students hold a bonfire every semester on the beach in Santa



Credential Program Changes

by Fathima Kaleel

The California Commission of Teacher Credentialing (CTCC) is requesting that changes be made to the San José State English Department's Teacher Credential Program to meet the new state requirements. Effective fall semester 2006, those changes include the following:

New required courses:

- English 109: Writing and the Young Writer
- English 117: Film, Literature, and Cultures (previously an elective)
- English 145: Shakespeare and Performance (revised)
- One course in World Literature to be selected from the following:
 - English 122: Topics in Comparative World Literature
 - English 123: A-D. Literature for Global Understanding (A = The Americas, B = Africa, C = Oceania, D = Asia)
 - English 125A: European Literature Survey

New recommended support course:

- Education 162: Language/Literacy Development

- courses:
- English 68B: American Literature Survey II
 - English 71, 130-137: Courses in Creative Writing
 - English 102: History of the English Language
 - English 115: The Bible as Literature
 - English 120 or 127: Theatre History, Contemporary Theatre
 - English 141-144; 146-154: Courses in British Literature
 - English 161-168: Courses in American Literature

Effective fall semester 2006, Dr. Mary Warner will be assuming duties as the Coordinator of the Department of English and Comparative Literature Teacher Credential Program.

Cruz, and take various road trips around the area. This past February, a group took a field trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Because of its loose organization this year, the ES has not been able to conduct many events; however, it hopes to get organizationally busier soon. The students want to start the department teas again, set up conferences and lectures, and do some more on-campus readings, including *Aesop's Fables* and *Beowulf*. On its more immediate agenda is a tea to honor this year's Visiting Lurie Professor, James Houston, which is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 26th at 1:00 in FO 104.

As I tune in again to the conversation, I notice it has shifted from Chuck Norris to a debate on Old English. I look around the room at my friends and become somewhat sentimental. This room brought us all together. I now see familiar faces around campus, grab lunch with new friends, and have cohorts in class. I take my education here seriously, partly because the people I surround myself with do the same. I have friends who are not only fun people to hang out with, but also have a love of literature, language, and education.

I do not remember how I heard about the ES, but I remember my first time walking through the door. Two students who are now good friends greeted me. They probably don't remember, but I sat down, and they immediately included me in their conversation, as if I had always been a part of the ES. I felt



that is the English Society. I introduced myself, and she did, too.

"Well, welcome!" I said, and she smiled. Then she left to go to her next class, but not before telling me how excited she was, as a new student, to make some new friends.

In less than a year from now, I will no longer be a part of this university. That new student, though, will still be here and will soon be a veteran ES member. She will pass on that welcoming smile that I gave her to a new student who pokes his or her head in, curious about the ES. I think that before I leave I will contribute some of my favorite books to the room; they will add to the shelves of books already there that professors and other students have donated. It will be my way of giving back to it, for all it has given me.

Alum Returns to Sender

by Rey San Juan III

Perhaps you have seen him strutting down the halls of Sweeney, and if you are *a fool such as I*, you may have wondered what the King of Rock and Roll is doing at San José State University. It takes only a second glance, however, to realize that this isn't Elvis come to campus to give music lessons; it's Elvis' greatest fan and SJSU alum Steve Woods, a craftsman not of music, but of words. He may not be the original *big hunk of love*, but he can certainly be your *teddy bear*.

Let's *walk a mile in his shoes* and learn from the *hard knocks* Steve has experienced during his academic career. Born in Connecticut and raised in Massachusetts, he moved to California when he was ten years old. He became *all shook up* over reading and writing when he was 13 years old and began writing short stories and poetry. His biggest influences were Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Joseph Conrad. When he became a freshman at Leigh High School, he knew he wanted to become a *flaming star* writer.

After graduating from Leigh, Steve moved on to West Valley. He earned his Associate of Arts degree, then transferred to SJSU to learn the *wisdom of the ages*. He took a *smorgasbord* of courses: philosophy, psychology, history, and English. After six years of *blowing in the wind*, he realized that he needed *a little less conversation and a little more action* to finally graduate. He focused on English for his major and philosophy for his minor, graduating in 1993.

Where do I go from here? was one of many thoughts Steve had after graduation. For a while, he did some work related to English; eventually, he became the *big boss man* as an English teacher at Del Mar High School in Campbell. After five years, however, he found out that his degree had not been processed, so while teaching at Del Mar, he came back to complete the necessary paperwork to get his degree. In the process, he discovered that SJSU was offering a Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing.

Realizing that teaching high school was not intellectually stimulating enough for him and missing how own school days, he decided to continue his education for *old time's sake*, and on a *husky-dusky day* in 2002, Steve quit his teaching career and joined the MFA program to *follow that dream* of becoming a full-time writer.

After a 10-year hiatus, Steve finds it refreshing to be back in a university environment. He is currently preparing his thesis, which includes a novella and a collection of short stories, for publication. Although he is done with his coursework, he still needs to complete his exams. He expects to graduate in December: *so close, yet so far*. During his time here he has not come across an English professor with a *wooden heart*:

they have all been intelligent, encouraging, and generous with their time, and for that he would like to say "thank you, thank you very much."

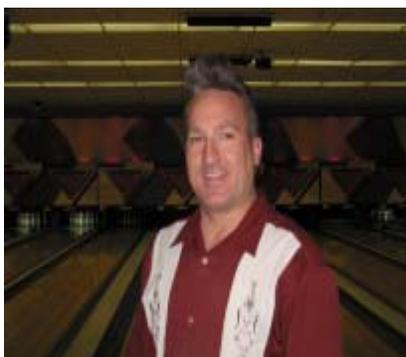
Once he graduates, Steve knows there's a *brand new day on the horizon*. He eventually wants to move to the Sierras, to *a little cabin on a hill* where it is quiet, peaceful, and ideal for writing. He also wants to find a junior college that lacks a creative writing program so he can design his own and share his *burning love* for

English. He is currently working on a novel he aims to finish by 2008. One day, he hopes to achieve that *impossible dream* every writer has: to be able to write full-time *today, tomorrow, and forever*.

When it comes to his writing, Steve feels he is not as diligent as he should be. Because his stories contain dark elements, *the devil in disguise*, so to speak, he prefers to begin writing around midnight on a cold rainy winter's night. The quietness and solitude of the night helps *get his mojo working*. His aim is to make his audience slow down their reading and appreciate the style, structure, and content of his pieces.

Steve feels that our culture is moving too fast. "As society evolves, we lose the quiet moments and our patience: nearly everything is designed to give instant gratification." He believes that we should read and write in a manner contradictory to the tendencies of society: slow and relaxed. He also feels that that writing, reading, and studying great literature can only be done one way—passionately. In that, Steve epitomizes the paradox that is rock and roll.

Ladies and gentlemen, Elvis may have left the building, but Steve Woods is here to stay.



Department Scholarships & Awards

by Ingrid Starink

As an English major, you know that writing papers comes with the territory. Make those long, laborious hours spent devising and articulating those brilliant theses work for you in other ways. Not only can you use your old papers to complete the English 193 Capstone Seminar, but with a little revising, you can also submit them for various departmental scholarships and awards.

Awards fall into two basic categories: those for which the student applies via written work, and those which require faculty nomination. Either way, there's an impressive selection and an impressive amount of money that gets distributed to deserving students. The James Phelan Award alone has eight different categories including metrical and free verse, short story, reminiscence, and critical essays. And for all you first-year students, check out the Shirley Nelson Iverson Scholarship, which is open only to freshman English majors who plan to become high school teachers.

The benefits of winning a scholarship or an award go beyond the pecuniary. Not only do awards encourage you to continue writing, but the honor will also enhance your resumé and may offer other opportunities such as prestigious memberships. Check out what some of our 2005 winners had to say:

"Poetry is a solitary art in its creation. The recognition has boost[ed] my ego and encouraged me to keep sending my work out. The Sibley [Award] was by faculty nomination. It meant a lot to me that my work was so respected by my teachers. The award I have enjoyed the most is the Araujo Award. Because it is part of the Academy of American Poets, I received a membership. [Awards] mainly serve to encourage writers to continue writing and developing as poets. They are 'green lights' in a world that is full of stop signs."

Neli Moody, graduate recipient, James Phelan Literary Award for Free Verse; Virginia de Araujo Award; Dorrit Sibley Award

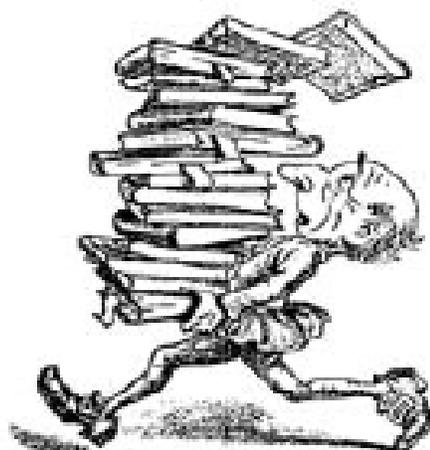
"I really do appreciate the professors who didn't let me settle for "good enough" on my papers—they've taught me a lot. Having my writing honored by our esteemed faculty has given me enough encouragement to balance out the rejection letters. Plus, the awards and scholarships I've received will put some polish on my resumé."

Jenny Walicek, undergraduate recipient, James Phelan Literary Awards for Short Story and Critical Essay; Roberta Holloway Undergraduate Award; Josephine Chandler Scholarship; Catherine Urban Scholarship

"I'm very pleased my essay won two of the awards, especially since the judge was an instructor I'd never met before. Knowing there was no bias involved in the judging instills confidence. It's weird having your creations win. It's like putting your child in a beauty contest, and when she wins, you get all the praise."

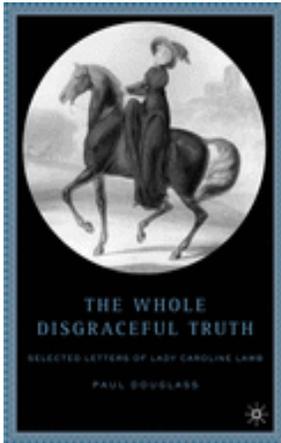
Richard Webb, undergraduate recipient, James Phelan Literary Award for Reminiscence Essay; Bonita M. Cox Award for Creative Nonfiction

For a complete listing of scholarships and awards, eligibility requirements, and application deadlines and procedures, check out the department's bulletin board in the Faculty Office building (across from FO 102) or visit the English Department's webpage at <http://www2.sjsu.edu/depts/english/award.htm>. The Awards Committee Chair, Andy Fleck, is also available for consultation. Contact him at (408) 924-4457 or via email at afleck@email.sjsu.edu.



Two New Editions to the Art of Epistolary

by Delilah Gallardo



Letter writing has become a lost art. People today have become so accustomed to cell phones, e-mail, and instant messaging that they have forgotten the importance of letter writing. Letters can be used as tools for teaching grammar, recording human experiences, and learning about different cultures and historical periods. Due to be re-

leased this year are two publications that greatly prove that this art is well deserving of our attention: Paul Douglass' *The Whole Disgraceful Truth: Selected Letters of Lady Caroline Lamb*, and Linda Mitchell's *Studies in the Cultural History of Letter Writing*.

Professor Douglass' collection of letters permits the reader to travel through the thoughts of Lady Caroline Lamb, a novelist known for her fascinating life, and whose work is increasingly attractive to Romantic scholars. Though Lady Caroline wrote letters to a great number of people, none were so famous as her lover, Lord Byron, with whom she had an extremely public affair. Although many of the letters between the notorious lovers have been destroyed, Douglass' book presents a new discovery: a lost letter from Lord Byron to Lady Caroline, which Lady Caroline transcribed in a letter she wrote to a close friend. It is discoveries such as these that show Douglass to be a meticulous researcher who is committed to delivering the "whole truth" in his books.

The chapter titles of Douglass' book reflect the main themes of Lady Caroline's letters: "Marriage," "A Reluctant Adulthood," "Byron," "Life After Byron," and "The Career of an Author." He intersperses detailed commentary between the letters, which puts the events of Lady Caroline's life into context for the reader. This book beautifully complements Douglass' biography of Lady Caroline Lamb by allowing Lady Caroline to reveal herself as a woman of untamable depth and creativity.

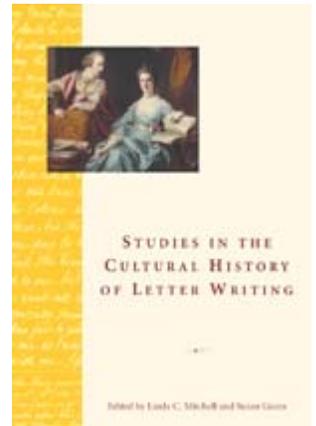
Douglass spent hours transcribing letters in the prestigious John Murray Publisher's Archive and traveled to the original homes of Lady Caroline in London and at Castle Howard. Douglass' work is enjoyable to read, for it demonstrates his sincere

devotion to successfully portraying the voice of his subject by using Lady Caroline's own letters.

Linda Mitchell's new book, *Studies in the Cultural History of Letter Writing*, is a collection of essays that address themes regarding the art of epistolary, such as letters of exploration, English letter-writing manuals, epistolary travel writing, and 19th-century letter-writing instruction, among many other topics. While editing the collection of essays, Mitchell felt it was imperative to produce a book that was, "coherent, accurate, supported, and succinct." She also did a lot of traveling to gather the extensive amount of rare material contained in her book, which included visits to several libraries, such as the Trinity, the Bodleian, and the Huntington.

Not only did Professor Mitchell put a great amount of time and energy into the book as an editor, but she is also one of the book's contributing writers. Her essay titled "Entertainment and Instruction: Women's Roles in the English Epistolary Tradition" describes how letter-writing manuals in the 18th and 19th century provide "a source for the study of 18th century culture." Her essay speaks to the commonalities that letter-writing manuals shared, which includes their similar motifs and their advice regarding society's expectations of a woman's behavior. Mitchell stresses the fact that the art of letter writing has not changed through the centuries, for people still write the same forms of letters and with the same intentions. When asked how she would describe the art of letter writing, Professor Mitchell responds succinctly: "It's a slice of life."

Though vastly different, Paul Douglass' and Linda Mitchell's works both demonstrate the personal and cultural significance of letter writing along with the importance of retaining the tradition. *The Whole Disgraceful Truth: Selected Letters of Lady Caroline Lamb* will be released this April, and *Studies in the Cultural History of Letter Writing* will be available in July 2006.



Shillinglaw's Journey into Steinbeck Country

by Rachel Haigh

"How could anyone be lucky enough to live in two perfect places in California?" asked Susan Shillinglaw, professor of English and resident scholar at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas, in reference to splitting her time between her home in Los Gatos and her husband's in Pacific Grove. For Shillinglaw, who recently wrote and published her first book, her towns are "Steinbeck towns," or towns in which Steinbeck lived and worked. "He wrote *The Grapes of Wrath* in Los Gatos and spent a lot of his time in Pacific Grove," she explains.

Shillinglaw's new book, *A Journey into Steinbeck's California*, is an installment in the ArtPlace series, which, according to the publisher's website, "turns the spotlight on revolutionary artists — painters, writers, and musicians — and the places in which they lived and worked." Complete with vivid photography, detailed maps, and informative prose, "each book is a revealing, entertaining, and thought-provoking guide to the paths traveled by these trailblazers." While Shillinglaw's book focuses on John Steinbeck, other books in the series focus on the native regions of artists such as Dorothy Parker, Georgia O'Keefe, and the transcendentalists.

Because of Shillinglaw's expertise in Steinbeck, the publisher, Roaring Forties Press of Berkeley, contacted her in August of 2004 to see if she would write the book. "I was charmed by the idea of a new press," she said. "I found it intriguing that they were starting a press and I thought that they had a good idea, the whole idea of region and the sense of place. I think place is as important in understanding a writer as is ethnicity or class. Region helps define writing." Thus, she organized her chapters by region. The book spans Salinas Valley, Stanford, Tahoe, Los Angeles, Pacific Grove, Monterey, Carmel, Los Gatos, the East Coast, and Mexico. "I try to show how different places shaped the kind of writer that he was and tell how place shaped his own prose and how in turn his prose shapes our sense of that place," she explains. "So, for instance ..., Monterey. We keep looking for Cannery Row. Or we tend to look at the Salinas Valley through his eyes."

A highlight of the book is its beautiful photography of the California landscape. Shillinglaw re-

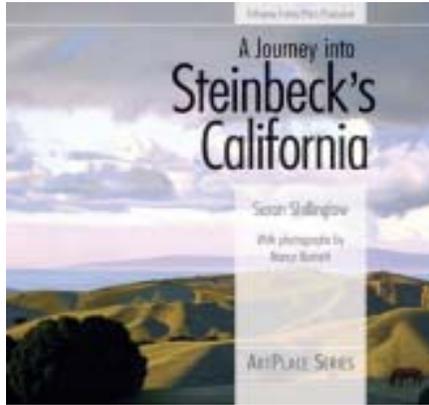
cruited the services of the book's photographer, Nancy Burnett, and located additional photographs in a number of Northern California archives: "[The publisher] wanted a blend of contemporary pictures — color pictures — and older photos. And so I found them in various archives ... I used a lot of photographs from the Stanford archives, and Salinas, a couple from San José State, and a lot from the Monterey Historical Society." She took pleasure in gathering the pictures, as well as in collecting information from the various communities within the Salinas Valley, the Monterey Peninsula, and the Bay Area. "The real joy is in the writing and the research and the talking to various people," she said. "I was down in Monterey, and so I was doing research in some archives in Monterey and a lot of people were wonderfully

kind, helping me shape it [the book]."

Because of the educational content of the book, reaching the widest audience proved to be the toughest challenge for Shillinglaw. "It was difficult to strike the balance between wanting to include a lot of information, wanting to make it accurate, wanting to quote from his letters and manuscripts, etc., and also making it readable."

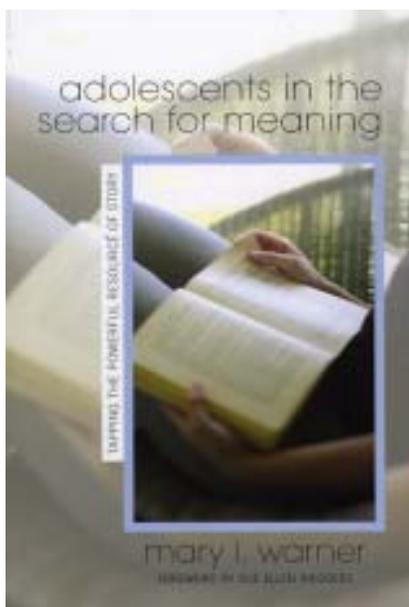
After running the Center for Steinbeck Studies at SJSU for over eighteen years, Shillinglaw resigned last May "in part to have more time to write." Having edited five books, she explains that she was spending too much time on editing: "Editing a journal is a lot of work. You have to keep reading other people's essays and kind of go back and forth, you know, shaping the essays. And so I just felt finally like I was grading papers all the time ... but that's what it was." Now able to concentrate on her own writing, she is finishing up two biographies — one on Steinbeck, the other on his first wife — which are scheduled for publication next year. With an introduction to *The Winter of My Discontent* in the mix, she admits that she's "working on too many things at once."

As for her new book, Shillinglaw is "delighted" with her accomplishment. She found it exciting to combine her mastery of Steinbeck with her love of writing. "It feels like ... [I've] produced something that's like a child ... It feels good," she says.



Tapping into Meaning

by Daniel Figueroa



In February of 2006, Professor Mary Warner's book, *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Resource of Story*, became available in all major bookstores worldwide. Based on a survey of 1,400 adolescents from around the country and directed toward educators, counselors, parents, and teens, the book offers a

valuable resource for anyone interested in helping troubled youth.

Warner's survey asked four principle questions: "What are the most important issues in your life?"; "Where do you go for guidance on these issues?"; "Have you ever read a piece of literature that you found helpful?"; and "What would you recommend for a peer to read?" The first half of the book provides a breakdown of Warner's survey as well as the data she collected on the literature the respondents referred to, including the authors' backgrounds and other works by them.

The second half of the book responds to the data collected by providing detailed information on literary texts that speak to the kinds of issues today's adolescents regularly face. The chapters are organized by themes: Real-Life Experiences, Facing Loss, Identity, Struggles with Decisions, Survival, and Parables. Each chapter provides an extensively annotated bibliography of literary texts that address the chapter's theme, along with teaching ideas and bulleted pointers to guide readers to and through the literature. The book also includes an appendix that cross-references titles, authors, and subjects, which allows easy reference for research purposes.

Warner hopes that by compiling a collection of resources that targets the biggest issues that adolescents and the adults who work with them some guidance. By reading stories about young people in similar situations, both may be able to relate and learn from them. "Sometimes," she says, one can learn more by reading a story than by just receiving advice."

In today's society, being a teen is increasingly difficult. Most adolescents are just trying to find their way in life. Finding one's independence as a juvenile is hard and often dangerous. Shootings, gangs, suicide, and unprotected sex are just a few of the everyday issues today's young people must regularly deal with. They need guidance, and in Warner's book, they may find some.

Graduation Information

The Department Graduation will be held on Friday, May 26th at 5:00 PM on the University Room lawn. A reception will follow in the University Room itself. Watch your mail for the announcement and procedures for reserving your place.

Fall 2006 Course Descriptions



English 56A: English Literature

Major literary movements, figures, and genres from the Anglo-Saxon period through the eighteenth century.

Professor Baer: MW 1330-1445

English 56A: English Literature

This course surveys British Literature from its earliest works through the eighteenth century. Its goals are to help students gain an overview of the major literary periods, genres, authors, and works of English literature. We will discuss these texts from a variety of perspectives, including the dynamic relationship between heroes and villains throughout early English history, considering what these representations reveal about the various societies that produced them.

Professor Eastwood: TR 1200-1325

English 68A: American Literature

This course surveys American literature from the precolonial period to the Civil War. Readings: Bradford, Rowlandson, Bradstreet, Equiano, Tyler, Rowson, Emerson, Poe, Thoreau, Fuller, Douglass, Jacobs, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, and Dickinson. Written work: Midterm, final, class work, and one short paper.

Professor English: MW 0900-1015

English 68A: American Literature

Survey of American literature, Native American myths to Walt Whitman.

Professor Chow: TR 1330-1445

English 71: Creative Writing

Examinations of works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short stories as expressions of human intellect and imagination, to comprehend the historic and cultural contexts, and recognize issues related to writing by men and women of diverse cultural traditions. Students will also write poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction. Satisfies lower-division G.E. Area C2.

Professors TBA: MW 1200-1315; TR 1030-1145; T 1900-2145; M 1500-1745; F 0930-1215

English 71: Creative Writing

Examinations of works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short stories as expressions of human intellect and imagination, to comprehend the historic and cultural contexts, and recognize issues related to writing by men and women of diverse cultural traditions. Students will also write poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction. Satisfies lower-division G.E. Area C2.

English 71: Introduction to Creative Writing

Taught online using the WebCT instructional platform, this course will involve both the reading and writing of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction. Students will read published works—contemporary and historical—of poetry, creative non-fiction, and fiction. Students will write original works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction in response to works by published authors that students will use as models. English 71 will explore the traditions of poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction as they have evolved over the last few centuries. Students will examine these traditions in the light of understanding the historical and cultural contexts from which they have arisen. The course will be taught using a combination of online small writing groups (organized as learning communities) and online writing workshops. In the discussion, published works of creative writing will be closely read and analyzed. In the writing workshops, creative work by class members will be analyzed and critiqued for revision. Students are required to participate in all workshops dedicated to the discussion of class members' writing. Satisfies lower-division G.E. Area C2.

Professor Soldofsky: On-line WebCT Section

English 100W: Writing Workshop

This course is an integrated writing and literature course designed to provide English majors with a firm foundation for the professional study of literature. Through close and careful reading of literary texts, students will develop the following: the ability to read, analyze, and interpret literary texts intelligently, and to respond to them critically both orally and in writing; advanced proficiency in both traditional and contemporary research strategies and methodologies necessary for writing research-informed papers about literary texts; a rhetorically sophisticated writing style appropriate to upper-division university discourse; and mastery of the mechanics of writing and manuscript format. Approximately half of our semester will be spent reading, analyzing, and writing about poetry.

Professor Cox: F 0900-1145

English 100W: Writing Workshop

Close reading of plays, a novel or two, short stories, and poems with attention to language and form as well as to content. A writing intensive course; includes a series of 2-page papers, a short research project, several essay tests, and a final examination. Required of all majors; should be taken during the first two semesters of the major. Also required before taking other upper-division General Education courses.

Professor Engell: TR 1200-1315

English 100W: Writing Workshop

Writing workshop for English majors.

Professor TBA: MW 1030-1145

English 101: Introduction to Literary Criticism

Do you see hidden meanings in literary texts? Billboards? Movies? Advertisements? Can you come up with three variant meanings for Pound's poem, "In a Station of the Metro"? There are many possible readings of all literary and visual texts. Even your own mental baggage governs your interpretation of the material. For this course, we will discover and apply critical methods to various literary, visual, and dynamic texts. Critical models will include foundational twentieth-century theory as well as contemporary approaches to literature (feminism, Queer theory, Marxism, post-colonialism, and more). We will apply this critical theory to texts across several historical periods or literary genres. Students can purchase our course textbooks from various used book dealers (be sure to order well in advance): *Texts and Contexts* by Steven Lynn, 4th ed.; *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Ed. Vincent B. Leitch; *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, Ed. Michael Payne.

Professor Harris: TR 1030-1145

English 101: Introduction to Literary Criticism

Study and application of various historical and contemporary approaches to literature, such as formalism, structuralism, new criticism, cultural studies, new historicism, post-structuralism, Marxism, post-colonialism, feminism, etc.

Professor Wilson: M 1600-1845; MW 1330-1445

English 103: Modern English

A survey of Modern English phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, transformational grammar, and the universality of linguistic structures. Material will also focus on some recurring problems of usage and/or correctness, regional and social varieties of English, the role of pragmatics in using language to communicate, and the historical development of English, especially as it affects the language today.

Professor Mitchell: MW 0900-1015; MW 1200-1315

English 103 Modern English

An overview of the structure and usage of Modern American English. Topics include the sound system of English, its word structures, sentence patterns, regional and social variations, and a brief discussion of its historical development. Material covered is relevant to those requiring a basic knowledge of the form and function of American English.

Professor Ohala: TR 1030-1145; R 1800-1045

English 106: Editing for Writers

Perplexed by punctuation? Grieved over grammar? Overwhelmed by organizational problems? Take English 106 for a solid review of diction, syntax, grammar, and punctuation. In addition, learn document-editing skills: how to organize papers, evaluate graphics, and perfect document design. This course will help anyone who wants to be a better writer.

Professor Lore: MW 1330-1445

English 109: Writing and the Young Writer

This course is designed to strengthen participants' writing skills in both creative and expository genres and to develop participants' knowledge and skill as future teachers of writing. Students will produce writing in three genres—memoirs, poetry, and expository in the form of the I-Search Paper. Each assignment will evolve through three drafts, incorporating response from writing workshops. The course will also entail writing partnerships and field experience for observing the teaching of writing in public schools. Texts for the course include *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, William Zinsser, rev. ed. 1998, Mariner Books *The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice For Beginning Poets*, Ted Kooser, 2005, University of Nebraska Press *The Art of Teaching Writing*, Lucy McCormick Calkins, rev. ed. 2001, Heinemann *Clearing the Way: Working with Teenage Writers* Tom Romano, 1987, Heinemann *Creating Writers through 6-Trait Writing: Assessment and Instruction*, Vicki Spandel, 4th edition, 2005, Pearson Education *Reading Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, K-12*. CA State Dept of Education, 1999

Professor Lovell: M 1660-1845

English 112A: Children's Literature

Introduces the literature of childhood experience to adult readers. Although children are the central characters and targeted readers, writers of this genre employ the same complex literary devices and themes found in adult literature. We will therefore apply standard literary techniques in analyzing the readings for this class. The readings are chosen with several factors in mind, including quality of writing, relevance of ideas, complexity of treatment as well as cultural and ethnic diversity; the fundamental factor, however, is literary merit. They invite serious contemplation of important

issues through sustained imaginative ventures that display variety, originality, beauty, and craft. Assigned readings are all chapter books, but students will have the opportunity to become familiar with picture books, fairy tales, and mythology as well. The approaches we will explore should be helpful for instruction at the elementary and middle-school levels. Nevertheless, this is a literature, not a methodology course.

Professor Krishnaswamy: MW 0900-1015

English 112A: Children's Literature

Study of literature for elementary and intermediate grades, representing a variety of cultures. Evaluation and selection of texts.

Professor Salewske: TR 0900-1015

English 112A: Children's Literature

Study of literature for elementary and intermediate grades, representing a variety of cultures. Evaluation and selection of texts.

Professor Rico: W 1900-2145

English 112B: Literature for Young Adults

The goal of this course is to acquaint students with as many YA books and authors as possible; we will read five novels as a class: *After the First Death*, *Whale Talk*, *Witness*, *First Crossing* (a collection of short stories), and one of the Harry Potter Books. The text for the course, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, introduces YA literature from several genres, provides author resources, and an accompanying web site. An additional text, *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning*, is recommended. Book Talks and a unit plan or annotated bibliography project are two other course requirements that will further students' knowledge of the expansive range of YA literature.

Professor Warner: W 1600-1845

English 113: Gothic Novel and Horror Fiction

Slasher films used to be a great way to spend "date night." However, we've become so jaded about horror movies (and the girl who always falls while being chased) that we are amused by them instead of genuinely terrified and awe-struck. These movies were inspired by horror fiction, including Stephen King's *The Shining* and multiple incarnations of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. All of these literary texts originate from the Gothic novel tradition, where psychological disintegration is quelled by sweeping landscapes. In this course, we'll establish the definition of "gothic" by reading Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Moving through the nineteenth century, we'll explore monsters, landscapes, and female victims as they appear in Gothic novels. In the twentieth century, we'll discover that "gothic" becomes synonymous with "horror." You may want a nightlight when reading these novels. Prepare to be scared!

Professor Harris: TR 1330-1445

English 117: Film, Literature, and Culture

Reading works of literature and screening films based on those works. Focus on how literary and film narratives depict cultures. A research project, a critical essay or creative screenplay project, and several essay tests. Elective in English major; required of single-subject credential candidates; Area V upper-division General Education.

Professor Engell: T 1500-1745

English 123A: World Literature

Professor Karim: TR 1200-1315

English 125A: European Literature: Homer to Dante

Euro-lit's classic hits, from Homer to Sappho to Dante's *Inferno*. An epic course...and then some.

Professor Mesher: TR 0900-1015

English 129: Introduction to Career Writing

This course provides an introduction to writing as a profession. Students will practice a variety of written genres for a variety of purposes and audiences: interview, profile, review, personal essay. Students will also plan, write, and produce two publications: *The Writing Life* and the *English and Comparative Literature Department Newsletter*.

Professor Cox: TR 1330-1445

English 130: Writing Fiction

Workshop in short stories or other short fiction. Prerequisite: English 71 or instructor consent.

Professor Berman: MW 1330-1445

English 130: Writing Fiction

Workshop in short stories or other short fiction. Prerequisite: English 71 or instructor consent

Professor TBA: T 1600-1845

English 131: Writing Poetry

This course will emphasize the metrical and formal techniques of lyric poetry, particularly the Greek ascending meters and the Italian and French rhyming forms such as the sonnet, villanelle, *terza rima*, *ottava rima*, etc.—although the brief narrative modes will be treated as well, including the ballad form, the sestina, and blank verse. Students will have the opportunity to write well structured *vers libre* also. Graduate students will do extra work, including the writing and presentation of a paper on the craft of a major modern poet. Prerequisites: English 71 or English 132, graduate standing, or instructor consent. Repeatable twice for credit.

Professor Maio: TR 1500-1615

English 133: Reed Magazine

Introduces students to all phases of literary magazine production—from selection of poems, stories, and essays for publication, to editing, proofing, designing, producing, and marketing—as well as fund raising and grant writing. Class sessions will serve as editorial board meetings, and each person in the class will take on certain editorial responsibilities for the entire semester.

Professor TBA: M 1900-2145

English 135: Writing Nonfiction

This course explores the many faces of Creative Nonfiction (also referred to by some as the New Journalism, or Literary Journalism). This is NOT a who, what, when, where basic journalism course, nor a technical writing class. You will read a variety of forms of the genre and learn a great deal about topics other than literature—which is the beauty of nonfiction. During the course of the semester you'll write a personal essay, a profile, a travel story, and a feature article, as well as one long work of your choosing. The various pieces you write will leave a nonfiction record of your world as you see it today, examining your own life, the physical planet, the people you share it with, and hopefully look at some of the forces that are driving them all. Prerequisite English 71.

Professor Miller: R 1600-1845

English 142: Chaucer

This course is an introduction to the major works of Geoffrey Chaucer, sometimes called the father of English poetry. We will be reading his works in the original Middle English, and a good deal of class time will be devoted to reading aloud, translating, and discussing textual difficulties. No prior experience or linguistic training is needed. Each student will be able to read Chaucer's Middle English aloud fluently by the end of the term. We will study the literary terminology relevant to the analysis of medieval literature and become familiar with fourteenth-century culture and history. We will also consider various modern critical approaches to Chaucer and discover how he has been read and understood over the centuries. A midterm exam, a translation project, a term paper (8-10 pages), and a final exam.

Professor Stork: MW 1030-1145

English 143: The Age of Elizabeth

"I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too!" These famous and rousing words, spoken by Queen Elizabeth I on the battlefield at Tilbury, exemplify the deft manner in which the Virgin Queen represented herself to her people. She turned her culture's assumptions about gender to her advantage, liking herself with a tradition of masculine power and monarchical authority. This course provides students the opportunity to study this fascinating and enduring figure from the early modern period. Students will

examine ways in which the Queen represented herself (in speeches, portraiture, and court entertainments) as well as the variety of ways she was represented by the major poets and playwrights of her day (including Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare).

Professor Eastwood: TR 1500-1615

English 144: Shakespeare I

Major plays.

Professor Baer: T 1900-2145

English 144: Shakespeare I: The Idea of Kingship, and the English Nation

Richard III, Henry V, Hamlet, Coriolanus, Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure, and A Midsummer Night's Dream

Professor Heisch: MW 1200-1315

English 148: British Literature 1660-1800

Come explore a century that saw the birth of the novel in English and the peak of English satire, a politically savvy period full of bawdy jokes and elegance, reason and sentimentality. Come see why contemporary artists have developed such a fascination for this period of libertines, of sense and sensibility, or pride and prejudice.

Professor Brada-Williams: MW 1200-1315

English 151: Twentieth-Century Poetry

In this course we will read selected works by a diverse group of Modern and Postmodern poets. We will investigate the work of several poets in depth rather than conduct a shallow survey of the entire field. The poets we will study have influenced all the work written since their time, or have introduced something new to the canon of Modern and Contemporary poetry. The reading list includes W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Robinson Jeffers, Hart Crane, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, Frank O'Hara, and James Wright. Students are urged to read as widely as possible beyond the poets on the required reading list. Class will utilize both a lecture/discussion and a seminar format, and is open to both undergraduate and graduate students. Undergraduate students will make two individual seminar presentations on the poets on the required reading list; graduate students will make three. Seminar presentations will be based on two 2,500-word papers that students will write for the class. There will be a take-home midterm and final exam.

Professor Soldofsky: TR 1330-1445

English 153B: Nineteenth-Century British Novel

With the Industrial Revolution in full swing, the nineteenth century saw many technological improvements and even more class disparity. With the mechanization of paper-making and the distribution of various reading materials, many British citizens became literate; some even clawed their way into the middle class, as was recorded by Dickens and George Eliot. However, the nineteenth century isn't all about great expectations and marches through the middle. We'll visit with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Dickens' lesser known *Old Curiosity Clock* to discover the impact of technology. By this time, it was agreed that women had a soul, thanks to Mary Wollstonecraft. But the problem of "uppity" women who wanted to be authors was inexhaustible. We'll read Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* to explore the "woman question" that so plagued their minds. By its conclusion, the nineteenth century had novelists declaring that "art is for art's sake" in a decadent flourish of bloodsucking (Stoker's *Dracula*). Other novelists were inviting readers to solve mysteries (Wilkie Collins' *Woman in White*) and go on adventures for the first time—and many went because they couldn't afford the actual travel vacation. H. Rider Haggard hosts such an adventure in his novel *She* and invites readers to unmapped regions of Africa where the main character, "She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed," dominates two of Britannia's most masculine citizens. Come discuss odd characters, weird situations, and a not-so-foreign culture.

Professor Harris: TR 0900-1015

English 163: American Literature 1865-1910

This course concentrates on literary realism and naturalism—with a little romantic poetry thrown in for flavor. We will read prose by Louisa May Alcott, Kate Chopin, Charles Chesnutt, Stephen Crane, Henry James, Sui Sin Far, Edith Wharton, Mark Twain, Booker T. Washington, and Zitkala Sa. Poetry texts will be drawn from Whitman and Dickinson's later writings. Midterm, final, oral presentations, and one paper.

Professor English: MW 1500-1615

English 169: Ethnicity in American Literature

Study of race and ethnicity in the literary arts of North America. Selected works of authors from such groups as African Americans, European Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Latinos, and American Indians. Advanced GE, Area S.

Professor Chow: TR 1030-1145; M 1900-2145

English 169: Ethnicity in American Literature

Beginning with Native American oral literature and ending with the contemporary novel and short story, the class will survey representations of ethnic identity in American literature chronologically. Internalized oppression, assimilation, the effect of race and class on ethnic identity, and the uses of literary and cultural innovation will be among the issues studied.

Advanced GE, Area S.

Professor Brada-Williams: MW 1030-1145

English 174: Literature, Self, and Society

This discussion course invites readers who like to write (and *vice versa*). Readings will be drawn from interesting, well written contemporary American literature, presenting multiple perspectives on significant subjects and events or contemplating the world through prisms of race, religion, class, geography, history, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Importantly, none will be "about" any of those things in any single-minded or polemical way: they will be "about" what it means to be alive in the world.

Professor Heisch: MW 1030-1145

English 176: The Short Story

Analysis and interpretation of selected short stories from the nineteenth century to the present. Prerequisite: upper-division standing.

Professor Maio: TR 1200-1315

English 190: Honors Colloquium, Satire in Literature

Prerequisite: Admission to the departmental honors program.

Professor Karim: TR 0900-1015

English 193: Senior Seminar

Culminating course for majors, requiring students to reflect on experiences in the major. Readings and discussions focus on literature and self-reflection. Each student submits a Portfolio of writing from at least five courses taken in major. Written work for seminar is added to Portfolio.

Professor Wilson: W 1600-1845

English 193: Senior Seminar

This course allows students to assess and demonstrate how well they have met the department Learning Goals. Students will compile a Portfolio of written work from at least five other English courses; significantly revise one of those portfolio selections; write an introduction to the portfolio that comments on its contents; read and respond regularly to assigned texts; and write a research-informed critical paper. Readings will include fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.

Professor Cox: TR 1030-1145



The Chair's Message

by Scott Rice

By now everyone has heard of James Frey's fictionalized memoirs and how they wrenched Oprah's knickers into a knot. In response to such literary fraudulence, and to set at least one record straight, I am offering my own memoirs which are—I swear—truthful to the last detail.

I was born on an ice floe in Baffin Bay, just off the island of the same name, and raised by a polar bear. I don't know what obstetrical whimsy drove my human mother to select an ice floe for a birthing place but the choice proved fatal to her and nearly to me. Polar bears usually give birth to cubs two at a time, and it was my good fortune to be found in mid-summer by a sow with only one cub and the desire to fill a pair.

Now the first thing you are probably wondering is why I did not freeze to death. Polar bears, as every school child without an iPod knows, survive in the Arctic because they have thick coats of fur and about four inches of blubber. Luckily for me, I inherited my father's acute hirsutism, and a diet of bear's milk and seal fat soon endowed me with the requisite blubber. Oh, and to answer the question that is forming on the edges of your mind, what does seal taste like? It tastes like chicken.

My adoptive mother realized early on that I would never be able to catch a seal on my own, being too much of a runt and having neither the dental capability nor a respectable set of claws. Quite accurately, she also diagnosed me with ADD and knew that I did not have the patience to lie quietly for hours by a hole in the ice waiting for a seal to pop up. Thus, all the while I was maturing, she was content to share her kill with me, right up until the time that I was found by an exaltation of linguists who, being enchanted by my ursine bawling, kidnapped me and took me back to California for study. Fortunately for me, I landed in a colony of ESL specialists and within ten years was able to say things like "Me hungry" and "Not tofu again." In fact, I would not be able to speak or write English today if I had not gotten into a freshman composition class at San José State.

Every memoir has to have a theme, usually how someone overcomes numerous reversals and eventually makes his peace with the world, and so it is with mine. With a loving, protective mother, all the seal I could eat, no school, and the long hibernations, I would have had an idyllic childhood but for one thing, sibling rivalry. When mom was away on a hunt, my big brother (he eventually reached 700 pounds and was bipolar) made my life, well, unbearable. His favorite stunt was to relieve himself in the snow and then . . . but the memory is too painful.

Now a lesser person would carry his bitterness to the end of his days, but I am made of better stuff. Thus it befell that eighteen years after I was hauled clawing and squealing from Baffin Island, I returned to the land of my forebears in a Cessna 152 and in the company of a man from Wyoming who included in his possessions an engraved and re-tooled .450 Martini-Henry. There I identified my brother on an ice floe, and the future office-holder erased forever the last vestiges of my sibling resentment.

The *Department of English and Comparative Literature Newsletter* is written and produced by students in English 129. Copy Editors: Fathima Kaleel, Dareth Pray, and Ingrid Starink; Layout & Design: Rachel Haigh and Katie Masters; Production Coordinator: Delilah Gallardo; Production Technician: Stefanie Chase; Proofreaders: Daniel Figueroa, Rey San Juan III, and Sara Scovil; Instructor: Professor Bonnie Cox.
