

# Suffolk University English Department Newsletter

Stuart Millner, Editor

September 2006

Anthony Merzlak, Chair

*The day shall not get up so soon as I / To try the fair adventure of tomorrow*

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## From the Chairman...

This September four new colleagues join the full-time English faculty. It is my pleasure to introduce them to you.

**Dr. Elif Armbruster** earned her PhD from Boston University. She studies prominent American novelists of the later 19<sup>th</sup> and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and is offering a new course in her speciality this semester.

**Dr. Peter Jeffreys** received his PhD from the University of Toronto. His book on E.M. Forster and Constantine Cavafy was published last year. He will offer a new upper-level course next term.

**Dr. Rebecca Tierney-Hynes** also graduated from the University of Toronto. Her research features innovative ways of reading both fiction and philosophy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Prof. Tierney-Hynes will teach our Enlightenment course next spring.

**Dr. Bryan Trabold** earned his doctorate at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He joins Rich Miller as our second specialist in composition and rhetoric. Dr. Trabold's experience in composition scholarship and administration will be invaluable, as we revise and enhance our program in Freshman English for the new curriculum.

We received more than 300 applications for these positions. To find, choose and recruit the best people was hard but rewarding work. I am grateful to my search colleagues: Lisa Celovsky, Gail Coffler, Bette Mandl, Fred Marchant, Rich Miller and Gerry Richman. They all join me in expressing special gratitude to the tireless and brilliant leadership of our search chair, Quentin Miller. We are already making plans for next year's search, for two more new colleagues.

This growing cohort of new, young professors comes at a perfect time, because Suffolk is changing in other important ways. The new Seminar for Freshmen, conceived by Dean Kenneth Greenberg and directed by Quentin Miller, is now fully up and running. Next year all courses in our college will become four-credit courses. Students will take fewer courses, but gain more depth of knowledge from them. Faculty teaching loads will go from six courses per year to five, with higher standards of publication and research now expected of younger faculty.

In other words, your *alma mater* is advancing to the next tier of academic achievement and reputation. I hope you are pleased with Suffolk's new direction. I also hope that you will participate as an active *alumnus* or *alumna*. Universities are ultimately judged by three aspects of quality—faculty, students, and graduates. To be a place we are all proud of, Suffolk needs your support.

I wish you a prosperous year. As ever, please do visit us when you are on Beacon Hill.

Tony Merzlak / Chair

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## Faculty Activities and News

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Of all the activities that grace this section, the one that tops the list is the retirement of **Gail Coffler** after a career of twenty-one years at Suffolk. During her final year, she received a Melville scholar's greatest honor—election to the presidency of the Melville Society. She also took part in the Moby-Dick Marathon of the New Bedford Whaling Museum and was

the speaker at the initiation ceremony of Sigma Tau Delta (the English honor society). At her retirement party at the Omni Parker House Hotel, Dr. Merzlak and other speakers summed up the high points of her distinguished career. On a similar note, the next faculty member to retire will be **Betty Mandl**, who will be leaving Suffolk this June, after thirty years with the department. Meanwhile, she has kept busy organizing curriculum workshops and studying her scholarly love, Eugene O'Neill, presenting a paper on O'Neill and memory at a conference in Louisville, Kentucky, last winter. Now, for other news about the activities of the large group of full- and part-time faculty. **Jennifer Barber**, teacher, poet, and editor of the journal *Salamander*, spoke about her journal to a Suffolk audience, published poems in *Field* and the *Harvard Review*, organized poetry readings, and participated in a writing conference in Austin, Texas. **Peter Caputo**, head of the Writing Center, has added to his staff and to the number of tutors to accommodate the greater number of students seeking writing help. **Lisa Celovsky** was promoted to associate professor and continued her articles on Sidney (and Ben Jonson), in addition to chairing a session of the Spenser conference in Toronto. **Tom Connolly** was active in reviving the English Department Lecture Series of guest speakers, as well as presenting papers at conferences at the Boston Public Library and the Eugene O'Neill Society. He was named to the Council for European Studies at Columbia University and continues his work on European theatre. **Marilyn Jurich** spent two weeks at the National Library of

Scotland studying chapbooks as part of her research on the subject. She also presented a paper for the Children's Literature Association. This June marked her fortieth year at Suffolk. **Fred Marchant**, Director of the Creative Writing Program and of the Poetry Center, organized readings by several renowned writers, including Distinguished Visiting Scholar Maxine Hong Kingston, former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, and Russell Banks. Among his many publications is an edition of the poems of William Stafford. **Marlene McKinley** continues as the faculty adviser to Sigma Tau Delta. The opera "Blind Tom," written and composed by her and husband Tom McKinley, will be performed by the New Jersey Opera Guild this winter. **Quentin Miller**, in the midst of overseeing the smooth implementation of the new Seminar for Freshman course (replacing Integrated Studies) and leading the search committee for new English faculty, published a book on contemporary U.S. prison literature as well as articles on Updike and the American novel. **Rich Miller**, kept busy managing the large staff of freshman English faculty and the seminars to improve the teaching of freshman courses, and also oversaw the English Department Open House, a happy gathering to preview the next semester's English courses and to allow faculty and students to mingle. **Gerry Richman** taught his very popular Boston course, but this time as Boston in History (co-taught with Bob Allison of the History Department). He continues to work on his Annotated Bibliography of Fiction Set in Boston. **Da Zheng** led students on a Chinese culture study tour of the People's Republic this summer, presented a paper on the Chinese diaspora in San Francisco, chaired a session of the Asian American Studies Conference in Atlanta, and published an article on travel writing and cultural appreciation. Last autumn, **Carol Dine's**

powerful memoir, *Places in the Bone*, was published, complete with author's party and good reviews. By the way, did you notice the handsome portrait of Emeritus Professor **Ed Clark** on the inside rear cover of the Suffolk magazine? He established the Edward Clark Scholarship for African American students.

We end this section on a sad note by informing you of the death of **Adjunct Professor Michael Knoll** in July. He was a good teacher and a gentle soul, very popular with his students and colleagues.

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### Special Events

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Here is a sampling of last year's events that were sponsored or co-sponsored by the department or the Poetry Center. Distinguished Visiting Scholar **Maxine Hong Kingston** spent a week at Suffolk, participating in lectures, receptions and meetings with students. Last year's guest, **James Carroll**, is now Distinguished Scholar in Residence. He offered a reading from his newest book. Another Distinguished Visiting Scholar of interest to English majors was noted theater person **Robert Brustein**. Each year **Marlene McKinley** and Sigma Tau Delta honor an emeritus/a professor. This year the Sigma Tau Delta Lecture Series honored Professor **Robert Johnson** with a presentation by former poet laureate **Robert Pinsky**. The Poetry Center co-sponsored poet, editor and essayist **Sam Hamill**. **Jennifer Barber** and *Salamander's* New Writers' Series presented **David Crouse** and **Jaqueline Pope**. Poet **Eamon Grennan** and classicist **Rachel Kitzinger** read from and discussed their translation of *Oedipus at Colonus*. Award-winning theatre librarian **Annette Fern** spoke on research and e-texts. **Russell Banks**, whose novels have been made into feature films, visited Suffolk to present a lecture. Finally, the Open House for majors

introduces students each year to upcoming courses, and *Venture* continues to thrive and to publish student and faculty fiction, nonfiction and poetry.

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### Student and Alumni/ae News

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Celebrating Career Week, we invited three graduates, **Michael Mirabile**, '95, **Kerri Quintal**, '93, and **Allison Stendardi**, '05, to return to Suffolk and discuss their work experiences. Other student news: The English 101 Essay Contest winners for this year are **Charles Dworetz**, **Jacqueline Wells**, and **Sherif El-Hadidy**. The Recognition Day awards: **Gerard McLean** (Warren Prize), **John McGuiggan** and **Adrienne Franceschi** (Vogel Scholarship), **Jennifer Guadagnoli** (Zohn Scholarship), **Colleen Finnerty** and **Callie Irish** (Murphy Prize), **Lacey Perkins** and **Abigail Johnson** (Creative Writing), **George Scala** (Recognition Scholarship), and **Elizabeth Harrington** and **Jennifer Nelson** (Achievement Award). The Writing Center Scholars are **Jill Bywell**, **Kyle Brown**, **Victoria D'Amour**, **John McGuiggan** and **Lacey Perkins**.

**Alumni News:** James Fleming received his M.A. from the University of Florida along with the Kirkland PhD Fellowship and has recently married. A sampling of graduates who wrote to say hello includes **Carol Lehman**, '72, **Joan Lan**, '81, **Shannon Johnson Hiltner**, and a graduate (who wishes to remain nameless) who entered Suffolk decades after graduating from high school and enjoyed every minute of her Suffolk experience. That's ending on a high note!

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