WINTER 2023

UW DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ANNOTATIONS

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A Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends,

"What can you do with an English major?"

I suspect that most of you have heard that question before, and perhaps answered it many times in many different ways. The pages of this issue of Annotations highlight a handful of the exciting ways that current English majors and alumni are finding their own answers. It also celebrates how alumni, faculty, and friends are helping today's English majors along the way.

You'll read about the English department's core role in the Health and the Humanities certificate, which turns five this year. We're hopeful for the future of the certificate and the ways that it is helping prepare a new generation of health professionals skilled in the wholly human art of medicine. You'll also meet a generous donor who, while not a UW-Madison English alumnus, credited his own success as a physician to his English and history majors and chose to support future English faculty at the institution where he spent his medical career.

This issue features multiple English undergraduate students who have worked with department faculty to go above and beyond the typical undergraduate curriculum. It's a rare privilege to travel along with Professor Caroline Gottschalk Druschke's "Writing Rivers" course as students collect oral histories in southeast Wisconsin's Driftless Area and build skills for community service and climate policy development. You'll likewise get a sneak peak at the honors theses being prepared by three department seniors, hearing about the creative, critical, timely work they are doing.

We'd love to hear from alumni, too: What are you doing with your English major? Your answers will almost certainly resonate with but go well beyond the professional options that will be represented in our first ever English major career fair later this spring. We celebrate all the ways that the UW-Madison English major has mattered for you and for the people around you.

With good wishes,

Christa

Professor Christa Olson
Chair of the English Department

Stay connected with the English Department!

We love hearing from alumni! If you have any questions or comments about this issue of *Annotations*, please contact us at webadmin@english.wisc.edu.

We would also love for you to follow us on social media for updates on department life. Click the icons below to visit our social media pages.

A Message from Eric Wilcots

Dean of the College of Letters and Science

Spring semester is underway, and there is much to celebrate this academic year! UW-Madison's freshman class is, once again, the largest in history, and it is also the most diverse. Here in L&S, we have a student body full of talent, and we are providing a world-class experience for those students. Engagement at SuccessWorks, our innovative career advising center, is at record levels.

One of my top priorities is to make sure we have a welcoming and inclusive environment in which all of our students can thrive and feel at home. I am thrilled with the work happening in our Center for Academic Excellence. CAE continues to provide a strong community of support, guidance, mentoring and connection for students from underrepresented groups, from the time they set foot on campus until the day they graduate. Our new leader of CAE, Karen Stroud Felton, is setting ambitious goals, including a digital-first strategy to share students' stories in their own words.

Great people and strong teamwork are pushing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts forward in every department in L&S. As our Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion DeVon Wilson put it, "this is mission work."

Visit ls.wisc.edu/about/diversity-and-inclusion to learn more about college-level initiatives and check in with your department about how to get involved.

We welcomed our largest cohort ever of new faculty in the fall, and we celebrated 18 colleagues in an Investiture Ceremony that recognized both our great faculty and the wonderful donors who made those professorships and chairs possible.

We need world-class spaces in which to learn, teach, and carry out research. We look forward to seeing the new building for Computer, Data & Information Sciences begin to rise in 2023 and we are deep in the design phase for Irving & Dorothy Levy Hall.

As I reflect on our progress, I am constantly reminded that together, we can and will make a difference. Thank you for all you do for the College of Letters & Science!

On, Wisconsin!

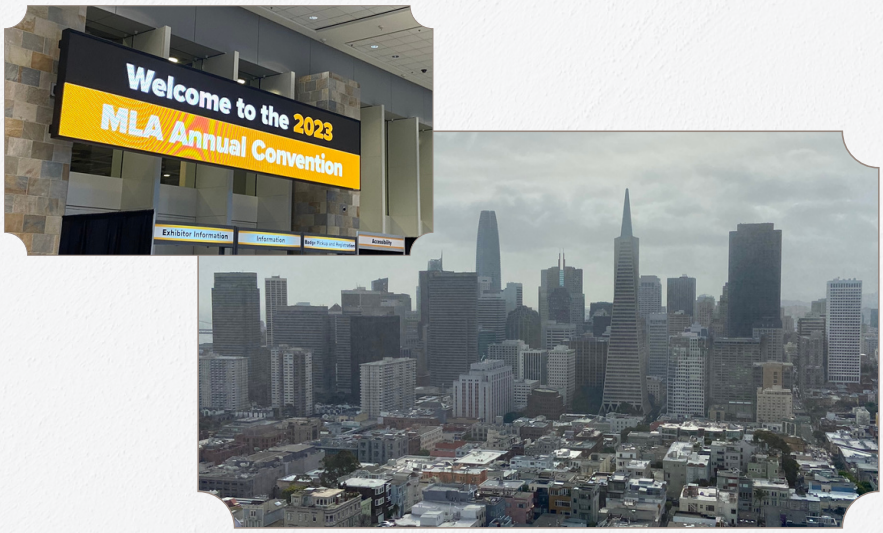
Eric Wilcots, Dean
Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy
UW-Madison College of Letters & Science

The difference your gifts make

This issue, we would like to recognize the generosity of Dr. John Morledge, who passed away in late 2022 at the age of 94. Dr Morledge was a respected and pioneering cardiologist at the UW Health University Hospital. He was moved to make a gift to the English department because the English courses he had taken as an undergraduate and the English professors he had encountered made such a profound impact on him.

Dr. Morledge also specifically made known that he wanted his gift to prioritize the funding of graduate student research travel. As a young medical student, research funds from his university allowed him to attend a symposium, an invaluable experience which resonated with him for decades to come.

As a result of this experience, Dr. Morledge was passionate about supporting graduate student travel and an advocate for how transformative it can be to travel and connect with peers and mentors in one's field. Most recently, a sizable contingent of graduate students from UW English were able to travel to San Francisco for the 2023 Modern Language Association Annual Convention, one of the largest humanities conventions in the world and a leading advocate for the study and teaching of languages and literatures. The annual MLA Convention is also an unmatched opportunity for graduate students to peruse a variety of professional resources. UW English grads delivered short lectures as part of seminars and sat on discussion roundtables, tackling topics which included "Health, Medicine, and Literature," "Intergenerational Environmental Humanities," "Transnational Approaches to Settler Ecologies," "Accents of the Anglophone," and more. The generosity of individuals like Dr. John Morledge will create spaces for graduate students and faculty to present and discuss current work and open channels both external and internal into sustained engagements with cutting-edge research in the humanities.



Dr. John Morledge

Our sincere thanks to the many alumni and friends who have generously supported the Department of English. Private gifts are critical to ensuring that the department maintains its stature as one of the nation's preeminent English programs. Your donations help us attract top faculty and graduate students, support promising undergraduate majors, and host a stimulating series of lectures, symposia, and other scholarly activities. Gifts of any size are most welcome and gratefully received. All our funds welcome contributions and bequests from alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations.

Make a gift today

THE HEALTH AND HUMANITIES CERTIFICATE

It's often one of the first questions students get asked when they step onto campus: "What are you majoring in?"

From Philosophy to Communications, Electrical Engineering to Art History, Geophysics to English, the University of Wisconsin offers 125 undergraduate majors across eight undergraduate schools and colleges, with many students deciding early on whether they're drawn more to science or humanities fields, committing themselves to major tracks which may not always allow for interdisciplinary coursework or enrollment in programs beyond the major. Shuta Kiba, the Health and Humanities (HatH) Certificate Advisor, is seeking to change that.

"In the past 10 years," says Kiba, "more than 100 new programs and certificates in Health Humanities have been created in North America, and medical professionals are increasingly interested in the humanities."

The Health and Humanities (HatH) Certificate is an interdisciplinary program launched in Fall 2017. It is a limited enrollment certificate administratively housed in the English department, although relevant coursework is offered in over a dozen departments, including Sociology, History, Bioethics, French, Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education, Religious Studies, Gender & Women's Studies, and Nursing. While the program is based in English, most enrolled students are not English majors.

"Many students applying for the HatH certificate are on a pre-med track," says Kiba, "but undergraduate students from any school or college at UW-Madison are eligible for the certificate."

"I can't emphasize enough the importance of being as informed as possible, of giving patients an equitable chance to be heard, recognized, and understood in a health care setting."

Students have the opportunity to apply for the certificate in the beginning of the Fall or the Spring semester. The program requires completing one of the HatH core courses, which include classes like "Science, Medicine, and Race" and "Exploring Religion in Sickness and Health," before taking two courses intended to familiarize students with health and illness in social contexts. Students are then required to enroll in a Cultural Competency course before completing their capstone course, which together foster in students the ability to comprehend and evaluate complex arguments about politics, values, healthcare, and health in contemporary society.

One current student enrolled in the Health and Humanities certificate, Caroline Weickardt, a neurobiology and psychology double major, credits the program with deepening her understanding of and respect for the human dimensions of health and care. Weickardt learned about the HatH program after taking "Literature and Medicine" with Associate Professor Sunny Yudkoff.

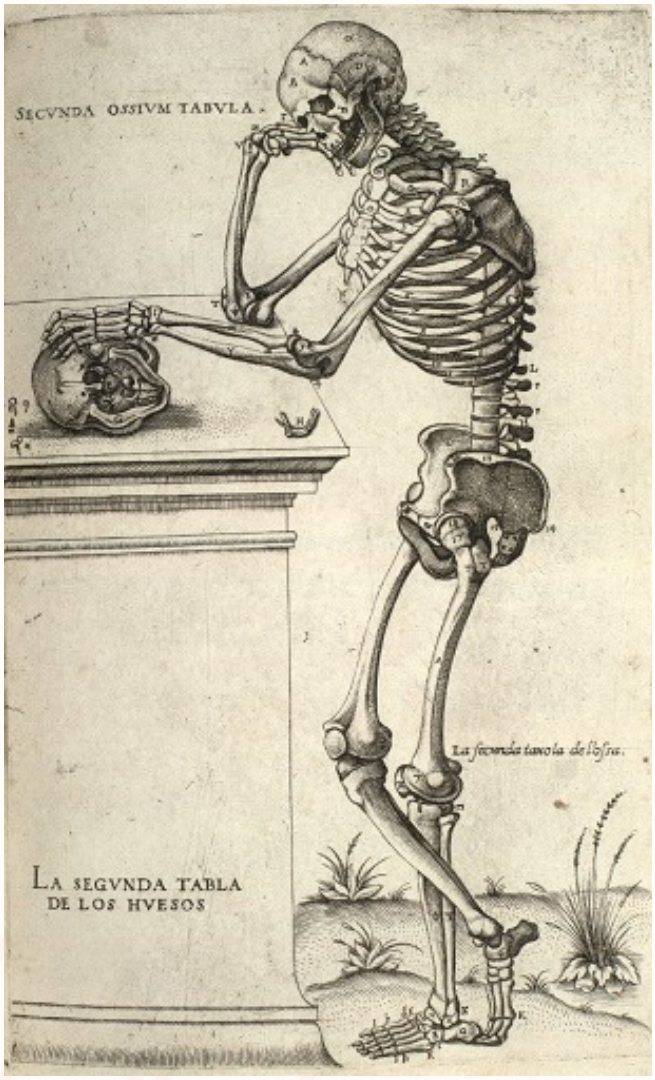
"I loved it," says Weickardt. "We read poetry and autobiography, comics and graphic novels, a wide range of literature that dealt with health and stigma and detailed how patients and doctors interact."

While Weickardt only officially enrolled in the HatH certificate program as an upperclassman, for her, the stakes of studying health and humanities and understanding the challenges of the health care system have always been very personal. From growing up with a brother with special needs, to working for many years as a lifeguard, to her current volunteer position assisting a woman with paraplegia, an outgrowth of her work in UW Madison's Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education 300 course, Weickardt has long understood that healthcare doesn't happen in a vacuum.

"Studying science can be extremely clinical, objective, unfeeling. One of the great benefits of this certificate is the ability to foster empathy. I can't emphasize enough the importance of being as informed as possible, of giving patients an equitable chance to be heard, recognized, and understood in a health care setting."

For students like Weickardt, the coursework in Health and Humanities Certificate program equips them with the skills to provide care for people in complex situations, to recognize implicit bias and, ultimately, to work to combat it.

With most aspects of daily life dominated over the past two years by a global public health emergency, programs like HatH Certificate open up productive interdisciplinary dialogues to include even more capacious approaches to understanding the cultural and ethical as well as scientific aspects of health, to "recognize," affirms Kiba, "the importance of the humanities and the crucial role it can (and must) play in the betterment of the culture of medicine."



HatH realizes a curricular and scholarly exchange between the humanities and the sciences, and Kiba is looking ahead to communicate to students the importance of this exchange across and beyond the University of Wisconsin:

"If the interdisciplinary dialogue between medicine and humanities is made just for the sake of securing the legitimacy of the humanities by riding on the coat-tails of medicine, or inversely, for the medicine to pick from the humanities whatever seems tangibly valuable for their agenda, so many things will be lost in translation. To open up a truly productive dialogue, I believe we need more societal and institutional support for the humanities, without which the dialogue will inevitably become one-sided."

"Writing Rivers" with Dr. Caroline Gottschalk Druschke

During the hot and humid final days of Summer 2018, Wisconsin experienced some of the most significant rainfall in recent memory. Record flooding occurred along portions of the Kickapoo River, a tributary of the Wisconsin River that runs through the Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin, forcing numerous evacuations and rescues and washing out bridges, highways, and homes; in Vernon County, alone, the flooding caused an estimated $29 million in damage.

In the Coon Creek Watershed, which stretches to the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers, the severe rainfall led to the breach of several dam structures, resulting in devastating flooding downstream.

Brad Otto, a resident of Gays Mills, a village in Crawford County on the Kickapoo River, recalls utility trucks pulling alongside peoples' homes in the predawn hours, workers turning off the gas to prevent explosions in the flooding. "It [rain] just came down like cats and dogs," he remembers. "It just was hammering down. Yeah, I thought, "Oh yeah, this isn't gonna be good.""

Devin Huessner, from La Farge, in Vernon County, recalls "Everything floating. Everything," his home's pristine white carpet "black with river silt mud."

The stories of those like Brad Otto and Devin Huessner are among the more than 100 oral narratives gathered as part of Stories from the Flood, a project launched by the non-profit Driftless Writing Center in conjunction with the Oral History Program at the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse to gather and share the experiences of community members following the 2018 floods. The twofold goal of Stories from the Flood, in the words of Director Dr. Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, is to facilitate community healing and draw upon the wisdom and insights of oral histories in order to inform policy recommendations and bolster flood resilience.

In 2022, Dr. Druschke began collaborating with the Coon Creek Community Watershed Council Inc. (CCCWC), Greener-Pastures (a Borghesi-Mellon Workshop at UW-Madison) and the UW-La Crosse Oral History Program on a new oral narrative project, with a goal of gathering 60 oral narratives about conservation, stewardship, and flooding in the watershed.: "'Learning to Make Running Water Walk': Living in the Coon Creek Watershed."

Dr. Druschke is a Professor in the English Department at UW-Madison working at the intersection of public engagement and freshwater ecosystems; key to compiling and archiving the oral histories for 'Learning to Make Running Water Walk' has been the work of UW undergraduate students enrolled in Dr. Druschke's "Writing Rivers" course.

For many of the students enrolled in "Writing Rivers," this was not only their first time collaborating with community partners to produce public humanities projects, but their first English class at UW Madison ever. Many, says Dr. Druschke, were intimidated at first.

""Writing Rivers" fulfills the Comm-B course requirement in the College," explains Dr. Druschke. "So quite a few students are not English majors. A huge part of the course is the work on location, travelling the five hours roundtrip to Coon Creek to conduct interviews and attend Watershed Council meetings. Students have to venture outside the UW bubble to engage with Wisconsin's freshwater ecosystems and the humans who rely on them."

In spite of students' initial trepidation, however, over the course of the semester Dr. Druschke noted her class's willingness to try new things. They cultivated empathy and humility in their interactions with both the Coon Creek Community Watershed Council and the residents of the Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin. Students collected oral narratives from residents of Coon Valley, a process which exercised their ability to craft timely, compelling analyses of personal stories while learning about Wisconsin, watersheds, flooding, resilience, and the power of bearing witness. In addition to honing their skills of written and oral communication and making productive use of the writing process, including brainstorming, drafting, incorporating feedback, and revising, students gained basic fluency in infiltration and soil sciences, water ecologies, and the history of the Driftless region.

"The students have been instrumental," affirms Dr. Druschke. "The residents in Coon Valley love them, and students in turn became more confident writers and interviewers."

More, Dr. Druschke notes how the integration of meaningful community service with the students' willingness to listen, to learn, to be open to new ideas and new possibilities, helped to rehabilitate the image of the university as closed-off and insulated from the rest of the state. The work of interview and transcription, as well as learning about the devastation caused by the 2018 floods, enhanced not only students' understanding of course content, but their sense of civic responsibility.

"Good community engagement necessitates being with people in their places, being on location," says Dr. Druschke. "The highlight of the class is the travel!"

Inspired by the region and its residents, students ran with the creative possibilities in their final projects. A nursing major and a physics major collaborated on a board game about flooding and conservation practices. Another wrote and illustrated a children's book, while a third completed a 4x4 foot painting. Several students contributed to an ArcGIS story map, an interactive web map that superimposes oral narratives over the geography of the Driftless region.

"Good community engagement necessitates being with people in their places."

The work for many of them will not end with Dr. Druschke's course, as several students have enrolled in independent study coursework or applied for HEX-U (Public Humanities Exchange for Undergraduates) project grants to continue their collaborations with the Coon Creek Community Watershed Council and the residents of the Driftless Area.

"The work the students are engaged in," says Dr. Druschke, "the interviews they have conducted and the stories they have listened to, the written and multimodal projects they have completed on behalf of our community partner, works towards the creation and preservation of Wisconsin's history and allows them to think critically about how that work connects to planning for the future."

Undergraduate Update

Read about the diverse range of senior theses our undergraduate majors are working on

Senioritis: a well-known phenomenon among college seniors with symptoms such as lack of motivation and a desire to spend all of one's time hanging out at the Terrace. But some seniors have decided to embrace a challenge by choosing to write an honors thesis, an ambitious project undertaken by just a handful of English students each year.

The honors thesis is typically about 50 pages in length and seniors work with a faculty mentor who provides feedback on drafts, suggests further reading, and generally acts as a sounding board for any questions and ideas pertaining to the student's topic. For Sarah Egan, who is advised by Professor Sarah Ensor and is writing her thesis on the construction and implication of domestic spaces in 20th century American Literature, the senior thesis seemed like a fitting capstone to her years as an English major.

"I have always enjoyed the challenge of writing analytical papers, and I wanted to write an honors thesis as a culmination (and in some ways, a celebration!) of my undergraduate experience in English," said Egan.

For Kelley Schulse, who is writing a thesis on James Joyce and advised by Professor Richard Begam, the challenge of taking on such a large-scale project was similarly enticing.

"As I pondered whether to do a senior thesis or whether to kind of coast through my final requirements senior year, I found myself returning to the idea of wanting to be scared a little bit - [fear] is the motivation that makes me want to keep working," said Schulse.

Elizabeth Brandt, who is working with Professor Mark Vareschi on a thesis about how 18th century authors began canonizing works from the early modern era, has found the self-directed nature of the project most challenging.

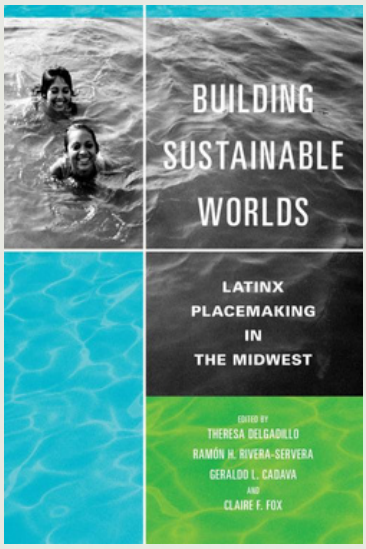
"You have to be really on yourself every week to do it and sometimes that's hard," Brandt said. "Learning to manage your time and hold yourself accountable has been challenging."

Though the students writing a literary studies thesis still have the rest of spring semester to complete their theses, the process of researching their topics and drafting the thesis has already had a major impact on both their future plans. Several students are considering applying to graduate school in the humanities in the future, influenced by their experience working on their thesis. And there are also the personal realizations that come from spending hours analyzing the same author.

"I do very frequently sit there in my cage in Memorial Library and think I'm not going to finish, I'm not gonna say anything new. I'm writing about Joyce who, besides Shakespeare, might be the author with the most extensive bibliography," said Schluse. "At the end of the day, [I've realized] the thesis doesn't have to change the world, it just has to change my world. Even if I don't produce some revolutionary work on Joyce, as long as I learn something from the process of it, and as long as I take something from Joyce that helps me see the world in a different way, I think the whole project will be worthwhile."

Publication Roundup

Check out the books published by our prolific English department faculty this past year

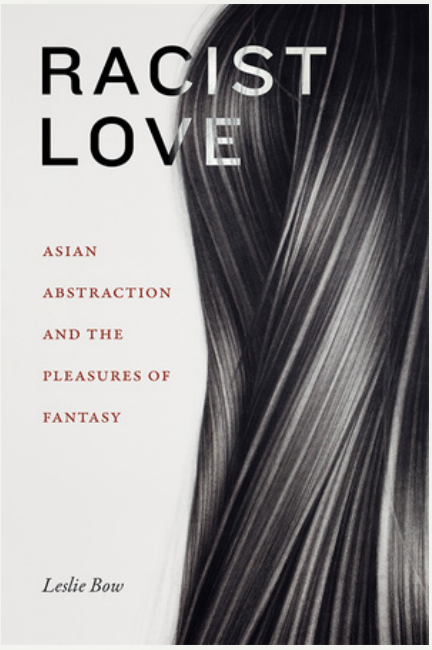


Building Sustainable Worlds: Latinx Placemaking in the Midwest
co-edited by Theresa Delgadillo

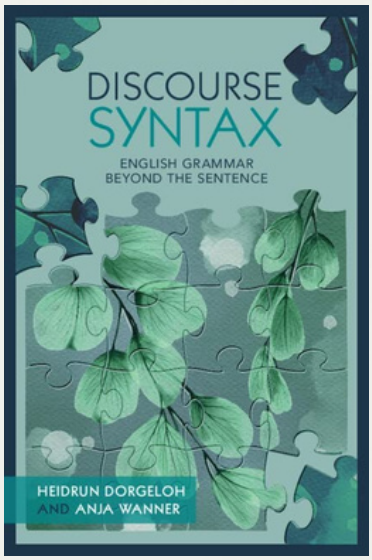
Latina/o/x places exist as both tangible physical phenomena and gatherings created and maintained by creative cultural practices. In this collection, an interdisciplinary group of contributors critically examines the many ways that varied Latina/o/x communities cohere through cultural expression. Authors consider how our embodied experiences of place, together with our histories and knowledge, inform our imagination and reimagination of our surroundings in acts of placemaking.

Racist Love: Asian Abstraction and the Pleasures of Fantasy
by Leslie Bow

Leslie Bow traces the ways in which Asian Americans become objects of anxiety and desire. Conceptualizing these feelings as "racist love," she explores how race is abstracted and then projected onto Asianized objects. Bow shows how anthropomorphic objects and images such as cartoon animals in children's books, home décor and cute tchotchkes, contemporary visual art, and artificially intelligent robots function as repositories of seemingly positive feelings and attachment to Asianness.

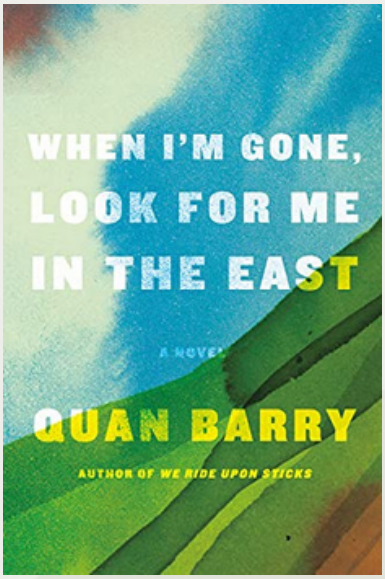


Discourse Syntax: English Grammar Beyond the Sentence
co-edited by Anja Wanner



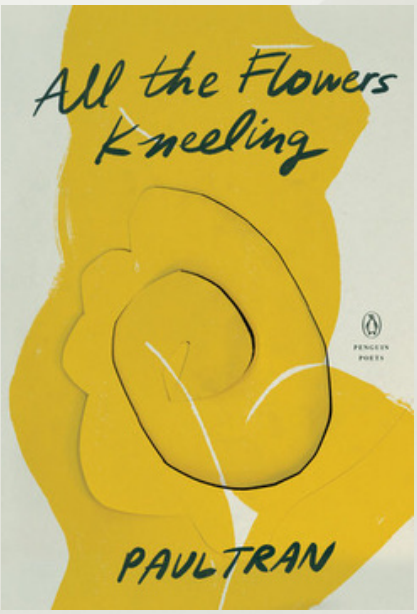
Discourse Syntax is the study of syntax that requires an understanding of the surrounding text and the overall discourse situation, including considerations of genre and modality. Using corpus data and insights from current research, this book is a comprehensive guide to this fast-developing field. It takes the reader 'beyond the sentence' to study grammatical phenomena, like word order variation, connectives, ellipsis, and complexity.

When I'm Gone, Look For Me in the East
by Amy Quan Barry

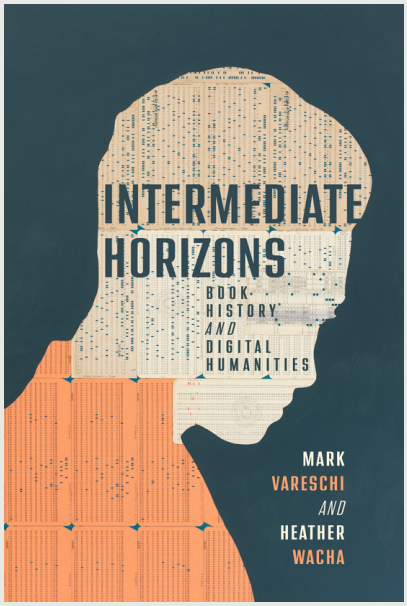


Amy Quan Barry's new luminous novel moves across a windswept Mongolia, as estranged twin brothers make a journey of duty, conflict, and renewed understanding. Proving once again that she is a writer of immense range and imagination, Quan Barry carries us across a terrain as unforgiving as it is beautiful and culturally varied, from the western Altai mountains to the eerie starkness of the Gobi Desert to the ancient capital of Chinggis Khaan.

All the Flowers Kneeling
by Paul Tran



Visceral and astonishing, Paul Tran's debut poetry collection investigates intergenerational trauma, sexual violence, and U.S. imperialism in order to radically alter our understanding of freedom, power, and control. In poems of desire, gender, bodies, legacies, and imagined futures, Tran's poems elucidate the complex and harrowing processes of reckoning and recovery, enhanced by innovative poetic forms that mirror the nonlinear emotional and psychological experiences of trauma survivors. This collection is also a finalist for the 2023 PEN Open Book Award.

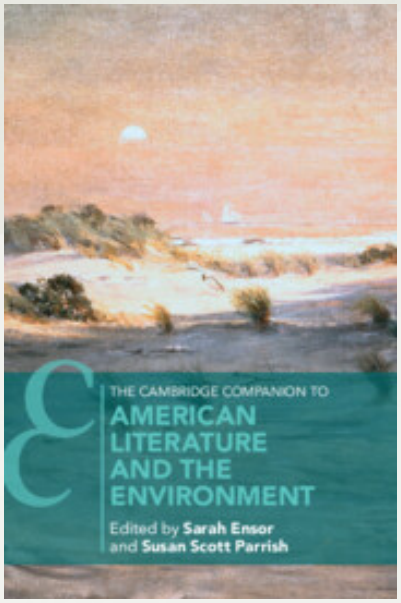


Immediate Horizons: Book History and the Digital Humanities
co-edited by Mark Vareschi

This innovative collection examines how book history and digital humanities (DH) practices are integrated through approach, access, and assessment. Eight essays by rising and senior scholars practicing in multiple fields—including librarians, literature scholars, digital humanists, and historians—consider and reimagine the interconnected futures and horizons at the intersections of texts, technology, and culture and argue for a return to a more representative and human study of the humanities.

The Cambridge Companion to American Literature and the Environment
co-edited by Sarah Ensor

This companion offers a capacious overview of American environmental literature and criticism. Tracing environmental literatures from the gates of the Manzanar War Relocation Camp in California to the island of St. Croix, from the notebooks of eighteenth-century naturalists to the practices of contemporary activists, this book offers readers a broad, multimedia definition of 'literature', a transnational, settler colonial comprehension of America, and a more-than-green definition of 'environment'.



Useful Junk
by Erika Meitner

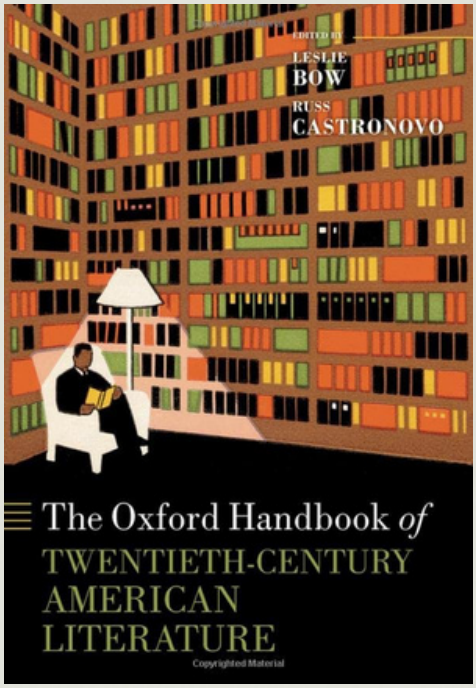
Meitner's sixth collection explores memory, desire, and the various ways the body sees and is seen. Part travelogue, part dream journal, part epistle, these poems arrive right on time with their wisdom, wit, and wonder. With dauntless vulnerability, Meitner travels a world of strip malls, supermarkets, airplanes, and subway platforms, remaining porous and open to the world, always returning to the intimacies rooted deep within the self as a shout against the dying earth.

Queer Forms
by Ramzi Fawaz

Ramzi Fawaz explores how the central values of 1970s movements for women's and gay liberation—including consciousness-raising, separatism, and coming out of the closet—were translated into a range of American popular culture forms. Throughout this period, feminist and gay activists fought social and political battles to expand, transform, or wholly explode definitions of so-called "normal" gender and sexuality. In doing so, they inspired artists, writers, and filmmakers to invent new ways of formally representing, or giving shape to, non-normative genders and sexualities.

The Oxford Handbook of Twentieth-Century American Literature
edited by Leslie Bow and Russ Castronovo

An essential and field-defining resource, this volume brings fresh approaches to major US novels, poetry, and performance literature of the twentieth century. With sections on 'structures', 'movements', 'attachments', and 'imaginaries', this handbook brings a new set of tools and perspectives to the rich and diverse traditions of American literary production. The editors have turned to leading as well as up-and-coming scholars in the field to foreground methodological concerns that assess the challenges of transnational perspectives, critical race and indigenous studies, disability and care studies, environmental criticism, affect studies, gender analysis, media and sound studies, and other cutting-edge approaches.



IN MEMORIAM

Olivia Ernst

Olivia was a brilliant scholar who received her Bachelor of Arts, summa cum laude, in English Language and Literature/Letters (Northern Michigan University), her Master's Degree, summa cum laude, in Medieval English Literature (University of Colorado-Boulder), and completed her Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) coursework on full scholarship in Early Medieval Literature (University of Wisconsin-Madison).

A scholar of Old English and Old Norse, and of premodern literature more broadly, her particular intellectual interest was poetic meter. She was the first contributing editor to the Old English Poetry in Facsimile Project (OEPF). One of her lasting contributions to the project is her edition of A Journey Charm, a medieval charm meant to help women through childbirth, which the OEPF has now dedicated to her memory.

In memory of Olivia, trees may be planted through the Sympathy Store or One Tree Planted. Donations may be made to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and/or Planned Parenthood, an organization Olivia strongly supported in her lifetime.

Eileen Ewing

Eileen Ewing, managing editor of *Contemporary Literature,* a peer-reviewed journal that serves as a forum for discussing issues animating the range of contemporary literary studies, passed away in January. Eileen graduated from Bluffton College. She also earned a master's degree from The Ohio State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin; both degrees were in English. She specialized in twentieth-century women's writing (Susan Stanford Friedman was her advisor). She had a long tenure working with *Contemporary Literature*, first as an editorial and administrative associate and then as managing editor. She met Mary Jo Heck, her partner of nearly 33 years, while they were both graduate students at UW. Eileen was a teacher, poet, editor, artist and healer. She loved birds and was always most at home in the natural world.

Online condolences may be made at www.gundersonfh.com.

Her family and loved ones will miss her deeply and always celebrate her life.