

In Writing

Grand Valley Writing Department | Fall 2018 | Vol 12.2

In This Issue

Study Abroad	1
Poetry Night	2
Australian Open	3
Distinguished Alum	4
LAMP Program	5
Visiting Prof. Coulter	6
Visiting Prof. Greve	7
Assistant Prof. Stinnett	8
Nonprofit Internship	9
Marian Crotty	10
Abroad (continued)	11
Multiliteracy	12

Contributors

Hannah Terry
Annie Cunningham
Abby Schnell
Jessica Sroczyński
Emily Reed
Audra Shull
Katherine Arnold
Rachel Kornoelje
Aly Rosema



A sunset in South Africa

(Photo: Christopher Toth)

Writing in Action Takes Students Abroad

Hannah Terry

This fall, the GVSU Writing Department announced its first study abroad program *Writing in Action*, a 6-credit program that will launch in Spring 2019. This faculty-led trip, offered by Associate Professor Christopher Toth and Librarian Liaison Hazel McClure, invites students of all majors to apply their writing skills in Cape Town, South Africa. The Writing Department has partnered with African Impact, a non-profit volunteer organization in Africa. The partnership will allow GVSU students to complete an internship with South African non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to address social issues in the country.

During this internship, students will gain experience researching and writing in an international context. The internships will include a variety of writing genres, such as grants, proposals, organizational storytelling, and social media writing. The NGOs students are set to work with aim to combat social and economic issues facing South Africa.

Beyond coursework, the *Writing In Action* program includes several field trips so that students understand the rich and troubled history of South Africa. Students can look forward to touring the Cape of Good Hope, Table Mountain, and Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned.

See ABROAD on page 11

Bringing Words to Life

Annie Cunningham



Limón signing her book for a fan

(Photo: Abby Schnell)

Consider the difference between hearing a concerto and reading the score. It may be the difference between reading a black and white poem and hearing it spoken by its creator, at a lit podium in a dark red room. It is simply a different experience altogether. On the evening of October 18, at the Eberhard Center in downtown Grand Rapids, two poets presented select works to an eager audience of listeners. Renown poets Carl Phillips and Ada Limón presented their poems at GVSU's annual Fall Arts Celebration, headed this year by Professor Patricia Clark of the Writing Department. This celebration heralded the sixteenth Poetry Night and the event was supported by many, including President Thomas Haas. There was a book signing and reception afterwards, where audience members could speak with the artists.

After calling for the lights to be lowered until the room felt “candle-lit,” Professor Clark introduced the poets. Limón would read first and Phillips second. Between the poets, there is a small shelf of poetry and a dynamic wealth of style, powerful ideas, and vivid imagery. Ada Limón has authored five poetry books, the most recent being *The Carrying*, of August, 2018. Currently, Limón is a professor in the M.F.A program

at Queens University of Charlotte.

Upon Limón's walk to the podium she was greeted with applause. She made it known right away that she would read ten, and *only* ten poems—in case the audience did not like her work or wished to see Phillips instead. The second reading was of “Dead Stars,” which she introduced with an unexpected anecdote involving the peculiar, hollow rumbling sound that recycling bins make when they are pulled across pavement. Limón's way of reading a poem is a *performance* that, in itself, is a work of art residuals from her days of studying Theatre as an undergraduate.

**“Here's to the silences
that yield poems, and
here's to your poems!”**

“Cannibal Woman,” the ninth poem, included another particularly impactful anecdote. The poem was inspired by a story she was told as a young girl, about a mountainous, angry woman who could level forests with her bare feet. The woman's tantrums shook the earth and she terrorized a nearby village. One day, the village people dug a pit deeper than the woman was

tall. She fell into it, down and down until she could not climb out, and the village attacked her. She was burned to death, and her ashes fled to the skies. From Limón's poem we learn that this is where mosquitos come from. This haunting tale was just one of the experiences gained by attending Poetry Night, and there were more interesting experiences to come.

Upon his turn at the podium, Carl Phillips was a reluctant comedian. He has authored 14 books of poetry. His most recent publication is *Wild is the Wind*, of 2018. Though he is accomplished and widely recognized, he found no trouble poking fun at himself as a poet. Phillips encouraged the audience to ponder his poems like they might a piece of abstract art. Of his selections for the night, he read “Mirror Window Mirror” first, telling the audience they wouldn't want to clap. Then, he read “Musculature,” and made it clear that his current dog's name is Ben, not Sovereignty.

In one memorable anecdote, Phillips recalled that reviewers criticized him for not using complete sentences in “The Dirt Was on Fire.” Phillips corrected this statement for the audience, saying he didn't even use complete fragments. Laughter followed, and the good time continued into an anecdote for “Gold Leaf.” Here, he let the audience in on an authorship secret—he did not know why the title was “Gold Leaf,” and that's the way he likes it. He wrote it staring at a cow skull in his office, adding, “Might as well make use of the useless.” At the last reading, the audience replied with a collective, low murmuring of approval. The air had suddenly adopted a weighted electricity, as if the shadows in the corners of the room were also nodding.

Another GVSU student who attended poetry night was kind enough to share a message Carl Phillips wrote in his copy of “Speak Low,” reading, “Here's to the silences that yield poems, and here's to your poems!” Limón signed a copy of “Bright Dead Things,” leaving an intriguing message: “For love, for hope, for courage, for a light in the dark.” These message can be googled and read again, but moments of connection and honesty with the poets are unique to a setting as open and easy as Poetry Night. Here's to the next one.

The Break Point: A Shot at the Australian Open

Abby Schnell

Between the pages of *Sports World Magazine*, Associate Professor Oindrila Mukherjee fell in love with sports writing. She grew up adoring the work of Rohit Brijnath, one of India's top tennis writers in the field. Back then, being a sports writer was only a dream for her. This year, between her career as a professor, a novelist, and a freelance tennis writer for *Scroll.in*, Mukherjee found her chance to cover one of the largest tennis tournaments worldwide: the 2018 Australian Open.

In the beginning, sports writing was barely on the professor's mind. "I was just going there to do a quick visit in Australia, see some friends, and watch the Australian Open before beginning my sabbatical work." Professors earn time off for a sabbatical once every seven years, if they are approved. With the Australian Open taking place in the winter, this year was her only shot at attending without interrupting her school semester.

Taking advantage of the moment, she asked her boss at *Scroll.in*, a growing Indian news website, if they wanted her to knock out a few articles while she was on vacation. With tennis being one of the top three sports in India and Mukherjee being a tennis writer, it was the perfect opportunity. So her boss offered something even better: a media pass. "I would never have been able

"It's very spur of the moment... but you already know who these people are and why this would be significant... You're already a tennis junkie."

to afford [those tickets] as a fan and sit so up close to the players... I would have never been able to afford that kind of thing." Mukherjee's spectator tickets turned into a three-day all-access pass, complete with access to the quarter-season finals.

Others might be intimidated on the first day of their dream job. Not Mukherjee. Like she always told her students, "You

cannot be a journalist if you're going to be shy." Bonding over a love for tennis, she was able to get tips and inside scoops from other reporters. "Everybody's in shorts and jeans... everybody's a buddy." Along with chatting up reporters worldwide, she got to enjoy watching a match with her childhood superstar, Rohit Brijnath himself. "He sat next to me for one of the matches and he was being very helpful." Their meeting wasn't one between an author and a fan, but one between two journalists, both there to enjoy the game.

With a lifetime of tennis knowledge behind her, Mukherjee had scored her break point in her sports writing career. It was a fast-paced environment, but one that was very rewarding. "It's very spur of the moment... but you already know who these people are and why this would be significant... You're already a tennis junkie."

Unlike her original plans, Professor Mukherjee did not attend the Australian Open as another fan. She had become a reporter in the stands, laptop in hand, watching the story unfold.



Associate Professor Mukherjee at the 2018 Australian Open

(Photo: Oindrila Mukherjee)

**Study Abroad
Applications
Deadline:**

February 1

Successful Alumna Lindsey Drager's Weird World of Writing

Jessica Sroczyński

“A LOT.”

These are the words distinguished alumna Lindsey Drager chose to answer the question: What have you taken away from Grand Valley that has helped you with your successful career?

Students and faculty alike gathered at the Mary Idema Pew library on October 14, 2018 to listen to Drager read excerpts from her books. Having written three novels— *The Sorrow Proper* (Dzanc, 2015), *The Lost Daughter Collective* (Dzanc, 2017), and *The Archive of Alternate Endings* (To be released)—having been awarded the 2016 Binghamton University John Gardner Fiction Prize and Silver in the 2015 INDIEFAB Book of the Year Awards in Literary Fiction, and having worked on a multitude of literary panels, Drager is no stranger to prestige.

After being introduced by Associate Professor Chris Haven, the atmosphere of the room upon Drager's entrance was light

“It's reverse psychology: every time I get a rejection, I get a sticker—you gotta love it.”

and fun as she excitedly expressed how “pumped” she was to see everyone gathered to listen to her read.

As she introduced *The Lost Daughter Collective* and what it means to be a Dorothy (a dead daughter), as compared to an Alice (a missing daughter), everything grew silent. The atmosphere shifted from joyful to grim as Drager's words embedded themselves in the minds of the audience. The eerie way she expressed speech without dialogue amplified the haunted air that befell the room. Drager strongly accredited her fascination of all things gothic to her early obsession with *The Twilight Zone*. “There's a lot of severed bodies, murder, incest...I'm just really interested in scary



Lindsey Drager reads an excerpt from her book

((Photo: Jenn Stull))

stories, stories that haunt, [and] eeriness.”

These themes were certainly present throughout her novels, and Drager considered it a crucial factor to be able to experiment with her work.

Lindsey Drager began as a Philosophy major during her time at GVSU. She found herself asking her professors if she could submit satirical final papers, until she was finally told to consider creative writing.

Naturally, it was a perfect fit. “The Writing Department is such a special place.” When asked why she pursued writing, she replied, “I was seduced by the idea that wow—I could be a storyteller!”

The most important thing Drager said she was able to take away from her time at Grand Valley was a sense of community. Having herself participated in the Student Reading Series, she found how important it was to surround herself as a writer with people who are willing to listen. “Writing is really lonely,” Drager said. “[So] get a sense of literary community.” When she wasn't writing, she could be found in the

Zumberge library reading each and every literary journal she could get her hands on. “The best way to become a writer is to read your ass off.”

During her time at Grand Valley, she found she was, “spreading [herself] as widely as possible, fueled by fear for after college.” This fear certainly payed off as she graduated and went on to search for an M.F.A program. In her search, Drager kept one thing in mind: “My writing is funky...how can I find a program to continue that?” She found her place at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she earned her M.F.A. in fiction. Then, she ultimately went on to earn her Ph.D. for creative writing from the University of Denver. She is currently working as an Assistant Professor at the College of Charleston in South Carolina where she also works on the college literary journal “Crazyhorse.”

Following the reading, students were able to gather again for a Q&A session with

See DRAGER on page 11

The Writing LAMP Program Connects Students With Experts in their Field

Emily Reed

The Writing LAMP (Laker Alumni Mentoring Pilot) Program connects current students with GVSU Department of Writing Alumni that are active in the field. The alumni mentors serve as experienced and knowledgeable resources to help navigate students through the writing degree since they have all already graduated. The program also helps students understand career possibilities in their field, develop community, interact with others outside of professors, roommates, or other peers, and make the transition from college to a career (or graduate school) smooth.

The WRT Lamp program was piloted in Winter 2018 with select junior writing majors who volunteered to participate. Students enrolled in the program were required to interact with their alumni mentee three times throughout the semester, attend one alumni panel presentation, and complete a brief survey about their experience.

Students were able to interact with their alumni mentors on the phone, through a video call, or in person if the alumni were geographically local. For the first meeting, the interactions generally served as a get-to-know-you session. Subsequent interactions usually focused on the job market (or

graduate school), with agendas made and discussed before each meeting.

The number of times a student interacted with their mentor depended on what they discussed and what concerns the student wanted to talk about. Nick Kondyles, one of the program mentees, noted that the program was largely based on the relationship developed between the mentor

“What is made of the experience is completely up to the mentor and mentee.”

and mentee. He also mentioned how the effort to build the relationship was beneficial in succeeding in the program.

“Although there are guidelines for the program to run smoothly, what is made of the experience is completely up to the mentor and mentee,” Kondyles said.

Part of what made the program such a unique and helpful experience was that it offered guidance from an alum who is immersed in the writing field outside of college. For many of the participants, the mentoring experience was quite

eye-opening. It made graduating clearer, offering insights on what to expect and what is out there for a graduated writer.

The program offered a lot of reassurance and opened the student mentees to new possibilities they may not have considered. For example, Emily Zerrenner said that her mentor, Rose White, went overseas after GVSU and finished a graduate program in one year, an idea Emily had not yet considered. Kondyles, on the other hand, was brought by his alumni mentor, Kenny Porter, to the *Writers Under Thirty* event to experience and meet a Grand Rapids writing community.

Although each interaction was different for all of the participants, they were always talking about writing, whether that be career, community, or editing. The WRT LAMP program definitely had a lot to offer these students and prepared them well on what to expect in the professional world while helping them grow in their writing.

This program will be open to all upper-level writing majors in Winter 2019. Students should respond to a email in late November from the Department Chair, Associate Professor Christopher Toth, if they are interested in being paired with an alumni mentor.

Writing In Action (Study Abroad in South Africa) **Information Sessions:**

Monday, 12/3 3:00-4:00pm LOH 179

Wednesday, 1/9, 3:00-4:00pm LOH 167

Professor Coulter's Sound of Business

Audra Shull



Visiting Professor Coulter
(photo: Jillian Neumann)

When students think of business communication, “music business” does not often come to mind.

However, Visiting Professor Andi Coulter finds that her background in music and video gaming works quite well for GVSU's Business Communication course. Coulter began her career working for the 9:30 Club music venue in Washington, D.C. Fielding every job— from runner, to box office, to eventually Marketing Director— gave her insights into the workings of a small business. After a decade in D.C. she left to work for Live Nation as a marketing manager for the Fillmore in San Francisco. During her tenure, she also worked for two in-world gaming startups putting on “virtual” concerts and meet and greets with bands such as Fall Out Boy and Lil' Wayne. “My career has followed a non-traditional trajectory,” Coulter states. “Working with Silicon Valley startups showed me new avenues of access and communication that would not have been possible in a more traditional concert setting.”

Coulter started to see that the creative

approach to business adopted by many of the startups mirrored what was happening in music. Both industries were redefining

“Pedagogically, the intent is to not write stand-alone documents, but create a written rhizome that shows the inter-connection of business communication.”

their communication in order to build better business models. After fifteen years, she eventually left the music industry to teach, bringing the creative element to the more traditional aspects of business writing. Coulter enjoys GVSU's Writing Department which takes a holistic view to both creative and professional writing. “I see the term ‘communication’ as a broad spectrum that

includes not only written documentation, but also new technological mediums, visual rhetoric, and oral communication.”

Coulter's course culminates in a team-driven competition where each group builds their own small business. The teams work on elevator pitches, business proposals, financing and even marketing plans. “Pedagogically, the intent is to not write stand-alone documents, but create a written rhizome that shows the inter-connection of business communication.” Students learn hard skills like cross-channel communication and branding, as well as soft skills like effective collaboration and conflict resolution. “It's been great at GVSU to have so many Computer Science students,” she added. “Their appetite for the creative approach is astounding and allows for more technologically-advanced projects.”

To further this creative problem-solving, Coulter is planning to integrate her winter course with the Grand Rapids community. Ideally, she'd love to have local businesses assess her students' final project in a Shark Tank scenario. “Many of my students are actively involved in local internships,” she remarked. “I look forward to cultivating more community involvement in my classroom in order for the students to see the impact of their writing in real-world situations.”

For Winter 2019, Coulter is teaching The Business of Hip-Hop, a business communications course using hip-hop as a semester-long case study. In her own words, “Artists who have been successful outside the dominant paradigm have approached their business creatively, considering new mediums and always placing their audience first.” The course will examine how business messaging adapts to suit new rhetorical situations with an emphasis on organizational communication and emergent technology.

In April, Coulter will speak at GVSU's Public Relations Student Society of America on the changing role of Entertainment PR. “I feel fortunate to have found such a welcoming student population here at Grand Valley. My students continually push me to think of innovative approaches to business communication.”

Notes from Professor Greve

Audra Shull

The enthusiasm Visiting Professor Curt Greve brings to his classroom is apparent in every word he utters while talking about his new position at GVSU. Greve's road to our university was motivated by his enthusiasm about teaching and research. He became interested in writing pedagogy during his undergraduate studies in English at Kent State University. After receiving his B.A., Greve moved to Japan to teach English for two years. His teaching experiences as well as his undergraduate courses inspired him to pursue an M.A. in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Dayton. His belief that active writing research is essential for purposeful teaching motivated him to return to Kent State and finish his graduate education there. Greve received his Ph.D. from Kent State's Literacy, Rhetoric, and Social Practice program, where he focused on literacy, research methods, and writing assessment and the ways that it can lead to better teaching and learning.

Greve chose GVSU for its research opportunities, as well as its freestanding Writing Department. His research focuses on student interpretations of portfolio grades. Many times, students receive feedback from professors but do not know what to do with it. Greve's research explores student interpretations and interactions with their professor's commentary. Since all WRT 150 classes use portfolio grading, the university seemed like an excellent fit for his teaching and research. Many of Greve's interests are in areas of assessment. This made GVSU a good fit, since it is the birth place of Directed Self-Placement and the WRT 150 portfolio system.

In his first semester as a visiting professor, Greve teaches three sections of WRT 150, which is the freshman writing requirement at GVSU. When teaching writing, Greve likes to take a student-centered approach; he enjoys seeing how students get involved in and often even take over conversations in the classroom. Greve's approach to teaching borrows from Paulo Freire's method where "dialogue is not only possible but central to how everything is approached in class."

Greve also values the Writing Department's focus on portfolios and enjoys

the faculty interaction and discussions centered on students' written work. "This is a unique environment. Everyone in the department understands that writing is a discipline. It's a different dynamic, and it's really exciting to be in that kind of environment. Everyone is excited to talk

"Everyone in the department understands that writing is a discipline. It's a different dynamic and it's really exciting to be in that kind of environment."

about writing all of the time."

The interaction with other faculty while discussing student portfolios is something Greve looks forward to every week. He loves teaching with delayed grading portfolios and

has been doing so for the past nine years. Because WRT 150 is a required General Education class, his students not only come from a wide array of cultural backgrounds, but they also come with different interests and intended majors. This results in more variety when it comes to reading and discussing portfolio pieces. The diverse backgrounds and interests of his students affect their topic choice and the way they build their written arguments.

Greve finds the environment at GVSU to be generally friendlier than some of the other campuses he has taught. He was also happy to find out that the students here are quite tech savvy. One of the projects he uses frequently in writing classes is an audio/video narrative where students use audio and music to discuss their educational experiences up until GVSU. Because the students at GVSU are adept at using various programs, it allows him to focus more on teaching writing and rhetorical aspects of their projects instead of teaching the technology.



*Visiting Professor
Greve*

(photo: Jillian Neumann)

A Word with Professor Stinnett

Katherine Arnold

Assistant Professor Jerry Stinnett is a professor who is dedicated to connecting with his students. He strives to create a learning atmosphere that any student writer will feel welcome in. He came to GVSU in pursuit of a writing environment that had a student-centered approach and a place where he could help students learn about writing in new ways. He believes GVSU to be such a place. As an Assistant Professor, Stinnett is currently teaching classes with topics on style and first-year writing. He appreciates the learning environment that exists within the Writing Department, especially how inclusive it is for every kind of writing student. During his time here, Stinnett plans to work hard to bring inclusion into every class he teaches while also working towards his plans for future writing and coursework that will engage students even more.

Originally from Claremore, Oklahoma, he pursued his Ph.D. in English with a concentration in Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy from the University of Oklahoma.



Assistant Professor Stinnett

(photo: Jillian Neumann)

fishladder
**Call for
Submissions
Deadline:**

December 14

His works have been published in several academic journals, including *College English* and *College Composition and Communication*. Currently, he is interested in assisting local individuals with grant writing. In the future, Stinnett hopes to write about students as writers and how they can apply their writing

“Writing changes based on situations, and sometimes you, as a writer, need to change too,”

to areas outside of the classroom, as well as work on bridging the gap between academic writing and the public eye. Outside of the classroom he loves exploring the world and new ideas through reading. During his free time, he loves to embark on road trips, hike in beautiful, out-of-the-way destinations, and occasionally play the guitar.

In the classroom, Stinnett strives to connect with his students by encouraging class discussion and debate, and a deeper way of thinking about what writing is. Through examining styles of writing, he hopes to engage with his students and leave them with a desire to learn more about why they write and what they hope to accomplish through writing. He also tries to become a mentor for every student as they pursue their writing careers by offering both guidance and constructive feedback. He wants each student to learn skills and techniques to improve the way they write and to recognize writing as a creation that they influence. Writing is something that their own experiences and situations can impact and shape as well. If there was one thing that he would want to tell his future students, it is that writing is a process of changes. “Writing changes based on situations, and sometimes you, as a writer, need to change too,” Stinnett says. He views writing as not only a tool to utilize, but also an experience that can shape who we are and who we want to be.

Mariah Otlewski, Making a Difference with her Writing

Rachel Kornoelje



Otlewski working a Make-A-Wish event

(photo: Mariah Otlewski)

Together, we create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.” This is the mission statement for Make-A-Wish MI, where Mariah Otlewski, a senior double-majoring in Writing and Public and Nonprofit Administration, had an internship in the 2018 Fall Semester in their Grand Rapids office. “Since I can remember, I’ve always loved working with children,” Otlewski said. “Make-A-Wish stands out as one of my favorite nonprofits because it truly makes an impact on the lives of not just the children but their families as well.”

When asked what a ‘typical day’ looks like when interning at Make-A-Wish MI, Otlewski had this to say: “Most days at my internship aren’t typical. With nonprofits there is an ‘all hands on deck’ policy with everyone. The various departments are constantly interacting and helping one another out.”

Otlewski has done various types of writing

while at Make-A-Wish MI. “I’ve produced and designed documents for events, written stories about wish families, and helped write other content. Internally, I’ve helped write daily staff-wide emails and reports on internal research and projects.”

The most rewarding aspect from Otlewski’s experience at Make-A-Wish MI has been the connections that she has made with Wish Children and

“No job I’ve ever had has been so rewarding.”

their families. “It’s humbling to hear the amazing story that each Wish Family has. It’s remarkable the strength that they have and [they] are inspiring to meet. These children and their families have been through a lot and to be able to share their story is a once in a lifetime kind of

opportunity.” Otlewski has learned a lot from this internship. “I’ve grown a lot when it comes to communicating with others as well as understanding how writing is incorporated within the office setting.”

She also reflects on why Make-A-Wish MI is so meaningful to her. “No job I’ve ever had has been so rewarding and life-altering than my time at Make-A-Wish. I wanted to work at a nonprofit to help positively influence others’ lives. But truthfully, I think they’ve influenced mine the most.”

Otlewski has some advice for students who may be considering interning with a nonprofit organization. “My supervisor once told me that when working at a nonprofit, you have to absolutely believe in the cause you’re supporting. And I would pass that same advice on to anyone else who is considering entering the nonprofit world. If you enter the nonprofit world because you want to impact the lives of people and, although cheesy, make a difference, I think you’re here for the right reasons.”

Otlewski reminds us that it’s important to love what we do. “If you find a nonprofit that has a mission that resonates with you, then go find out if it’s right for you. I don’t think you’ll be disappointed.”



A Make-A-Wish sign

(photo: Mariah Otlewski)

Let Yourself Be an Amateur Again

Aly Rosema

On September 17, writing students gathered at GVSU to glean wisdom from the acclaimed fiction writer, Marian Crotty. Crotty is the author of the short story collection *What Counts as Love*, which won the John Simmons Award for Short Fiction. Her fiction work has also appeared in journals such as the *Kenyon Review*, *Southern Review*, and *Alaska Quarterly Review*. She currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Writing at Loyola University Maryland as well as an Assistant Editor for *The Common*.

Crotty came to GVSU to give a craft talk as well as a reading. At 1:30 pm, Assistant Professor Todd Kaneko stood in front of students and faculty and introduced Crotty. She began her craft talk about the writing process, something many writers question, yet usually don't have a clear answer on how to best put into action.

Crotty opened the craft talk by asking, "Is writing hard?" As expected, most students nodded their head along with the professors that lined the wall. Crotty then said that although it is impossible to remove the challenge that writing imposes on us, we can

"Don't treat whatever it is that you have written as a measure of how good of a writer you are."

lower our standards and keep writing. "Don't treat whatever it is that you have written as a measure of how good of a writer you are," Crotty continued. She explained to students how having that fixed mindset can make writing more difficult and how you need to feed your curiosity with a growth mindset.

Throughout the craft talk, Crotty gave students practical strategies to spice up their writing: playing around with the point of view, varying the amount of time covered, exploring new forms, completing primary and secondary research for authenticity, and including fantastical elements in a story. To demonstrate how to play around with these different strategies, Crotty had students discuss what they have done before, what they have seen others do, and what they



Crotty Reads an excerpt of her novel
(Photo: Abby Schnell)

would like to try and experiment with. As Crotty said, the point of all this is "to try something new. To let yourself become an amateur again."

Later that night, Crotty performed a reading for students and staff alike. Marion Jamet, a senior in the writing major, introduced Marian Crotty. Jamet's opening statement was eloquent and heartwarming, discussing what she believed to be what counts as love as she grew up and then tying it into what Marian Crotty writes about in her short story collection *What Counts as Love*. Jamet excellently said, "Marian Crotty's work is experiencing the lives of familiar humans in unfamiliar ways; making these experiences new again," much like Crotty discussed in her craft talk about experimenting with writing.

As Crotty came up to the podium, the audience clapped and everyone enjoyed listening as Crotty read her short story "Common Application Supplement." The Found Form she uses creates restrictions for herself using a word count to answer every question while also making a cohesive story.

Later, during the Q&A portion of the evening, Kaneko asked Crotty what inspired her to use the found form of the

supplemental questions that are attached to the Common Application. She replied that the form is where she started. She loves the idea of lyric essays and using different threads to show a pattern of change, which this form allowed her to do.

The night wrapped up with Kaneko opening up the floor to students to ask questions. A lot of questions focused on the writing process and how Crotty is able to make such unique stories that all fit around one central theme. Other students asked for advice on how to continue writing,

"Crotty's work is experiencing the lives of familiar humans in unfamiliar ways."

even when it gets tedious. Crotty often referred back to her craft talk, discussing the elements of writing someone can play with. In the end, Marian Crotty is the perfect example of challenging yourself and experimenting with writing. After all, isn't writing more fun when you are an amateur?

ABROAD*continued from page 1*

Toth and McClure believe this new program will offer students an opportunity of a lifetime. Students will obtain valuable internship experience while also discovering South Africa's unique culture and history.

"There is no other faculty-led study abroad program that offers an internship credit at GVSU, so students truly have a unique opportunity here with this new program," Toth said. The faculty directors hope that this program will not only include writing majors but any student who seeks professional writing, research, and internship experiences in an international context. The program is open to all majors so that students with diverse backgrounds will feed into the overall experience for everyone. GVSU encourages all students to strive for a new form of learning through international education. The Writing Department encourages students to consider *Writing in Action*.

Toth and McClure split this program into two segments for the 6-week spring semester. For the beginning 2.5 weeks, students will take WRT 380 Writing in International Contexts at GVSU to obtain the writing knowledge and skills necessary for their internship abroad. Students will then fly to Cape Town, South Africa to begin their internship with an NGO for the remaining 3.5 weeks.

The application for *Writing in Action* is due February 1, 2019. To be eligible for this program, students must have taken WRT 150 and have a minimum GPA of 2.0. Participants are also required to bring a laptop. For writing majors, this study abroad two-course program satisfies six credits in the major. Majors can use the international internship course as a substitute for the

"There is no other faculty-led study abroad program that offers an internship credit at GVSU, so students truly have a unique opportunity here."

required WRT 490 internship course. The Professional Writing in International Contexts course will satisfy a General Education Issues requirement. After Spring 2019, the program will be offered every other year.

Interested students can find the application at www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad. Scholarships for study abroad programs are available to students as well. Students interested in planning a study abroad should make an appointment at the Padnos International Center or contact Toth or McClure with any questions.

The penguins of South Africa

(Photo: Christopher Toth)

**DRAGER***continued from page 4*

Drager. Many young writers filed into the room and listened to an interview between Drager and Assistant Professor Todd Kaneko. Once the opportunity was given for students to ask their own questions, the one that resonated the most with the audience was how Drager deals with writer's block. Her reply was disheartening to many, as she revealed that she herself has never struggled with the age-old obstacle. Less disheartening, however, was when Drager revealed how often she too struggled with literary rejection. Her advice? Reverse the system. Whenever she gets rejected, she celebrates. "It's reverse psychology: every time I get a rejection, I get a sticker—you gotta love it."

At the end of the Q&A session, Drager concluded with some final advice to the students.

When it comes to writing: "Think of yourself as a map maker...write and explore, then go back and make a map to the end."

When it comes to rejection: "You've been rejected—celebrate!"

When it comes to Grand Valley: "Don't be afraid to put your writing out there, read literary journals, and don't hesitate to be a part of the community."

Oh, and the worst advice she's ever received?

"Don't write."

We're glad to see she didn't listen.

**Writing Department
Scholarship
Applications
Deadline:**

March 1

WRT 150 Explores Multiliteracy

Annie Cunningham

A student's writing is a journey—their major may take them through scientific journals, philosophical premises and conclusions, research proposals, creative writing, and through any number of contexts and rhetors. WRT 150 is often the precursor to a student's journey of writing in college. This foundational class enables students to experiment with a variety of academic writing techniques in relation to research, with a focus on organization and purpose. WRT 150 focuses on the process of drafting textual arguments in an ever-changing world of communication. A recent shift in the program has occurred in response to the question: Is textual instruction enough in our digitized world?

In 1996, a worldly group of scholars published an appeal to change the way we understand and view literacy. The group was The New London Group, and the appeal was *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures*. It presented innovative ideas for changing the way we educate, the way we learn, and the way we communicate. Many years later, their ideas are creeping into the curriculum with the intent of engaging students with innovative, more effective ways of communicating ideas. Recently at GVSU, the guidelines for student work have been expanded to include opportunities for digital literacy in a pilot group of WRT 150, and faculty have been encouraged to experiment with different modes of communication in their WRT 150 classrooms. Assignments have expanded into composing in a wide range of digital projects, including photo and video essays, infographics, and mapping projects to name a few.

One of the faculty experimenting with this new approach is Associate Professor

Amy Stolley, Director of First-Year Writing at GVSU. When asked about the effects of the new assignments in her classroom, she replied, "Specifically, we see that multimodal assignments invite students to become more reflective and deliberate in their writing choices, making careful decisions about genre, audience, and purpose." She went on to say, "Students also reported that they were thinking more critically about what type of information to include in their pieces depending on their chosen genre and audience." By looking at assignments through new lenses, students are able to better understand the contexts of their writing.

"We see that multimodal assignments invite students to become more reflective and deliberate."

She expressed her enthusiasm for this innovative shift through the lens of student potential. "As an instructor, the most exciting thing to see in teaching these assignments was how students began to understand that writing can do things in the world, and that if students work to develop their writing and communication skills, they can begin to participate and have influence in their communities in meaningful ways."

Though the dawn of an age where everyone is multiliterate is still far ahead, changes are taking place right now to better prepare upcoming generations of learners for a world where digital communication takes precedence.

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