

IN WRITING

Grand Valley Writing Department | Fall 2019 | Vol. 13.2

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Writing in Action study abroad trip at Table Mountain (photo: Rachel Kornoelje)

Writing in Action: South Africa

Rachel Kornoelje

An experience of a lifetime. I heard this phrase from numerous people before I left for Cape Town, South Africa, on the Writing in Action study abroad trip in May 2019. We landed in South Africa on May 24 at 9:44 pm. South African time (which is 6 hours ahead of MI). There were twelve students total on this trip, and having flown from Grand Rapids to Detroit, Detroit to France, and then from France to South Africa, a total of about 25 hours later, we were all exhausted as we waited in line at customs in the Cape Town International Airport.

Monday through Friday we all worked for our nonprofit internships.

My internship was through the Africa Makes Foundation, as a Creative Content Intern. The organization's mission is "to develop a sustainable ecosystem driving empowerment through education and the socio-economic transformation of Africa through technology, underpinned by 3D printing, additive manufacturing, and design thinking, as we enter the fourth industrial revolution."

The Africa Makes Foundation was in the startup phases when I arrived to help them out. I started out by writing a website analysis based on what I

CONTRIBUTORS

Rachel Kornoelje
Nathaniel Lawson
Chiara Nicholas
Hannah Terry
Ryan Moore
Matthew Senn
Kristie DeVlieger
Jessica Sroczynski
Juliana Holth
Annie Cunningham
Corrina Picano

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Two Internship Awards, One Department

Nathaniel Lawson



INTERNSHIP AWARD WINNERS

Internship recognition award winners with Writing Department Chair Toth (photo: Chelsea Best)

Internships, a requirement for graduation and the first taste of what the future may look like for many students, can often be a source of stress. For others, however, they are an opportunity to excel. Every year the Career Center honors such individuals with an award at their Internship Recognition Luncheon, an event important enough to be attended by former President Haas. This year two of these awards were earned by members of the writing community: Chelsea Best winning the award for Outstanding Intern of the Year and Senior Affiliate Professor Dauvan Mulally declared as Outstanding Internship Advocate.

“It was such a surprise,” admitted Best. “My work was being spread through campus. I feel like that is maybe why I was chosen.” Working as the marketing and design intern at the Human Resources department on campus, she was responsible for creating promotional

materials for workshops (such as “Emotional Strengths Training” and “Interpersonal Communication”), writing newsletters, and running their social media accounts.

“Many of my best interns have come from the writing program.”

According to Chelsea’s supervisor and nominator, Lindsay DesArmo, this work had an impact on more than one hundred faculty and staff, to the extent that the university is considering trademarking and copyrighting some of her designs. Additionally, DesArmo lauded her for her key skills in listening, critical thinking, design, and problem solving, along with her “ability to anticipate and plan as well as be supportive for her fellow interns.”

Although working on the other side of the program as the Writing

Department Internship Coordinator, Mulally’s success can be traced to many of the same sources. “I really work hard to listen closely to students during the advising appointments and hear what they desire out of an internship experience,” she said. “Additionally, I am always asking for feedback and advice from current student interns in WRT 490 and others to see what I and the Writing Department can do to better prepare them for their next chapter.” This drive to help students and change the program for the better has led her to take such measures as embracing remote writing and editing internships and traveling to New York City to establish more connections and learn about the editing and publishing fields.

Having one award winner from the Writing Department is noteworthy enough, but two in one year is

SEE AWARDS ON PAGE 11

Living Through Poetry: Kevin Young and Ellen Bass

Chiara Nicholas

“Alive is complicated,” Kevin Young stated during a craft talk with GVSU students and faculty. This profound statement was simply the answer to a question about how he incorporates history into his poems and whether he ever finds it difficult to talk about historical issues, yet this statement also speaks to what poetry means to him. Poetry is about our experiences in life and is meant to enlighten some of the more difficult issues we are not able to talk about in conversation. These experiences, as well as how to live through the issues that come with them, were just what esteemed poets Kevin Young and Ellen Bass shared on October 3, 2019, at the Fall Arts Poetry Night.

Young has gained prestige in the world of poetry for the tremendous eleven volumes of poetry he has had published as editor at the *New Yorker*. Bass is the winner of the Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Poetry and has written three books of poetry. She has also written five books dealing with sexual abuse and LGBTQ awareness. Bass’ blunt realness about life accompanied with her soft-spoken reading contrasted perfectly with the booming, upbeat tone of Young’s.

Bass started her reading with “Relax,” a poem about the terribly real things that can happen in life, in an ironically sarcastic, humorous tone. She also read her poem “The Morning After” and explained that it was written when she was annoyed at her wife. Bass’ way of connecting with the world in a raw and personal way is one of the most admirable qualities of her poetry, and the poems she chose to present at the Poetry Night truly exemplified this quality.

Young connects his experiences with racism to works of poetry in his book *Brown* to provide a captivating

insight about his life and the effects that racism has on our society as a whole. Young’s heartfelt poetry connected with the audience in an inspiring way because of the wide range of emotions he expressed during his reading at the Fall Arts Poetry Night. He shared the fear he felt about his son going out to his friend’s house for a sleepover in the poem “I Doubted” during a time when young kids were getting shot. His deeply rooted connection to community was also clear when he sang during a piece of a poem written about Linda Brown, a member of his church and central advocate for equality in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case after being denied access to an all-white elementary school in Topeka, Kansas.

“You can give back to the ecosystem of poetry.”

Bass and Young’s visit was welcomed with an additional craft talk that inspired the future writers here at GVSU with insight about how to succeed in the writing world. They offered tips about how to start writing more poetry. They urged writers to start by writing every day and find a schedule that works for them. Some writers have a set hour every night that they can sit down and write, but Young revealed that he writes in bursts, sometimes not for days at a time. Another valuable source of writing is the small notes jotted down during the day. Wherever you are, if you get an idea, write it down.

During the craft talk, Bass and Young also provided their own personal stories about how they started writing. Young talked about having many mentors in his beginning



Ellen Bass (photo: Chiara Nicholas)

years as a writer and revealed that he even helped edit some of their work. He stated, “You can give back to the ecosystem of poetry.” Poetry, and writing in general, involves a community of people invested in creating new ideas. Gaining the insight of other writers, no matter their experience, can be very helpful.

Bass ended the night on a note that many young writers can relate to: “I was not that talented to start out,” she boldly stated. It is especially inspiring to hear a well-known poet also doubting their talent at the beginning of their career. It shows that if these accomplished writers were able to gain such high recognition while starting out with the same doubts, other writers should also have the courage to keep writing and developing their abilities until they can reach the same level of success.

New Faculty Profile: Kylie Jacobsen

Matthew J. Senn

If you are to enroll in one of Assistant Professor Kylie Jacobsen's courses in upcoming semesters, you will probably hear that "Writing at school and writing at work differ because the purposes and the context of each differ." The quote comes from *The Essentials of Technical Communication* by Tebeaux & Dragga, and really highlights two concepts, purpose and context, that take important roles in Jacobsen's classroom discussions about workplace writing.

Jacobsen, in her first tenure-track position, will be teaching courses in professional and web-based writing. She was initially drawn to professional writing during a journalism class in high school. She enjoyed talking to people, learning about their interests or achievements, and writing articles. "My teacher told me that my articles were strong and as I was beginning to think about college I started looking for schools that would support me through a writing program," she explained. She was attracted to Southwest Minnesota State University, a liberal arts university, which was launching a degree in professional writing for the first time. "Within that degree I had a lot of flexibility to explore different types of professional writing and ultimately found myself drawn to technical writing and user experience design and research."

"Writing at school and writing at work differ because the purposes and the context of each differ."

Her research interests also focus on these areas as she explores the overall question about how people

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Students who take writing classes are serious and creative problem-solvers who want to tackle communication problems with open minds and critical thought.

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Assistant Professor Kylie Jacobsen (photo: Zsuzsanna Palmer)

access visual technical communication to make decisions by means of user experience (UX) research methods. She is currently working on a collaborative UX project with an out-of-state math department on students' approaches to reading and writing mathematical arguments. "Using eye-tracking research, I documented students' eye movements while they worked with mathematical arguments, and with that information I have created data visualizations to communicate the needs for different curricular approaches to reading this specialized information." Jacobsen started this research while she was completing her graduate work towards her Ph.D. in Technical Communication and Rhetoric at Texas Tech University. Texas, however, was not easy for someone from Minnesota. "I am really excited to be back in the Midwest. My couple years in Texas were a little rough. Real

hot. Real dry," Jacobsen laughed.

Regardless of the cooler climate, Jacobsen has found a warm welcome. Commenting on her first impressions about GVSU, she stated, "Students who take writing classes are serious and creative problem-solvers who want to tackle communication problems with open minds and critical thought. I look forward to keep learning from them!" She also commented on the beauty of the GVSU campus, "My walk between classes is a favorite part of the day." Jacobsen, who enjoys kayaking and researching genealogy in her spare time, is hopeful and passionate for her future at GVSU and looks forward to celebrating her students' achievements as they use their writing skills to make other people's lives easier or more enjoyable.

Professor McCarthy and the Role of Business Writing

Kristie DeVlieger

What does space exploration need metaphors for? That was the question that Visiting Professor Michael McCarthy asked while he was a graduate student. He studied technical communications and rhetoric and had his eye on the skies: he wanted to work on space exploration's communication to the public. "I focused on how an organization like NASA communicates their science for future generations by their use of metaphors to explain concepts and bridge gaps for novices," he said, adding that his main interest was looking at whether science had a place for figurative language within public communications. McCarthy believes that this figurative language could break down complicated information in a manner that would show its impact, as well as be less confusing. This need in the STEM fields has widely impacted his writing and teaching methods.

"Business writing is changing, especially as web writing and content writing is becoming more important."

McCarthy has been in the field of technical writing since 2010. He began studying at Louisiana State University, where he received his Bachelors degree in literature with an emphasis on rhetoric and communications. He also earned a Masters degree in 2015 and a PhD in 2019—both in Technical Communication and Rhetoric. He has been published in the *Health Communication* in 2017 and in *Technical Communication Quarterly* in 2018.

Aside from teaching, McCarthy has a background in IT support

and web management. He has managed two different technology labs at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and Louisiana State University. Then, at Texas Tech University, he was the English department's webmaster, whose job was to apply business communication to the web. One of his duties was managing content strategy interns who often had no experience in content management. Instead of viewing his work with interns as a hindrance, McCarthy viewed it as an opportunity to teach business writing in a real-world context, something he now brings to his courses.

The journey to the software engineer side of web writing made him realize that the way that the information was taught was not conducive for most students. "Business writing is changing, especially as web writing and content writing is becoming more important," he said. Because of his experience as a webmaster, he has a strong interest in technical communication and how its role is changing.

McCarthy is currently working on a project about exploring web development as a technical/professional communicator. As someone in the writing field who has a strong background in IT tech support, he believes web writing is a useful skill to add to your repertoire. "Web writing and content development is much different from business communication traditionally," he stated. McCarthy has been a web developer for a year now and has found it changed some of his views on technical communication, saying, "A lot of the document writing for [web writing] courses are written with bad writing." This is something that McCarthy hopes to change.



Visiting Professor Michael McCarthy
(photo: Zsuzsanna Palmer)

He brings his insight on the field of technical writing into his classes. While at GVSU, he is teaching WRT 350: SWS Business Communication, and WRT 200: SWS Introduction to Professional Writing. He has a set goal for the content of the courses he teaches, and for what he strives to achieve through teaching. "In these classes we are working on honing a different skill set- writing genre driven documents for wider audiences." In order to meet challenges that arise, he promotes teamwork with various disciplines; real-world skills that students will need to be able to use in their professional careers. McCarthy sums it all up, saying: "Professionalism in writing is still necessary, and I hope to prepare my students for the many things that the business world will ask of them."

Seeing the Big-picture with Professor Milligan

Hannah Terry



*Visiting Professor Sean Milligan
(photo: Hannah Terry)*

Visiting Professor Sean Milligan knew that teaching at GVSU would be different than any of his previous teaching experiences. Though his expectations for GVSU's students, professors, and the WRT 150: Strategies in Writing course were high, they have since been exceeded. So far, Milligan has been enjoying his time here teaching GVSU's unique introductory writing course. He has been teaching introductory writing courses for eight years and has always loved the rewarding experience of working with first-year writing students. He studied Elementary Education at Rochester College and obtained his Masters in English Literature at Oakland University. Once he began teaching classes, he discovered a new passion

for composition. He then pursued his PHD at Wayne State University.

Milligan was drawn to GVSU because of the well-known portfolio grading system of its introductory writing course. WRT 150 is a detail-oriented and challenging class that prepares students for writing in their future academic classes. It teaches students information literacy, an essential skill according to Milligan. This class also gives students the ability to research and synthesize information in any discipline. When it comes to research, Milligan strives to push his students away from easy topics and engage with new ideas. He views teaching at GVSU as an opportunity to experiment as a professor. He aims to challenge students with more creative assignments that step away from the traditional. Milligan has enjoyed teaching students the foundation of college writing because of the opportunity to create relationships with students and equip them effectively. He hopes his students leave his class with the ability to "evaluate information they encounter in other contexts while being able to navigate the 'big picture' aspects of writing."

Connecting with students is very important for Milligan. He has established many positive relationships with students over the years, but there was one that stuck out to him most. To Milligan's surprise, a student who failed one of his courses approached him and thanked him for the failing grade. Milligan was shocked; it was the last thing he expected. The student understood that they had not learned the necessary skills needed to succeed in the rest of their academic career and recognized Milligan's conscious effort to strengthen every student's

ability to write. This student thanking him, serves as a constant reminder for Milligan to actively engage his students, even when it is challenging.

In his first semester at GVSU, Milligan has already met many interesting professors and engaged students around campus. He believes he is lucky to experience the unique blend of rhetoric, composition, and creativity that builds the Writing Department. The passionate people at GVSU have already proven to Milligan that the Writing Department has "a lot to offer for students." Milligan feels constantly supported by the professors, students, and family he is surrounded by. He believes that this constant support is invaluable and keeps this as motivation when teaching his writing classes.

Alumni Update

Logan Bailey (2015)
was accepted into the
Masters of Science
in Communications
program at Purdue
University.
Congratulations!

Caitlin Horrocks' First Novel: *The Vexations*

Juliana Holth



The Vexations book release (photo: Caitlin Horrocks)

The debut novel of Professor Caitlin Horrocks, *The Vexations*, was released for publication on July 30, 2019, by Little Brown; one of the country's oldest and most distinguished publishing houses. *The Vexations* was named one of "10 July Books You Won't Be Able to Put Down" by *O*, the Oprah magazine, and *Kirkus Reviews* called it "finely written and deeply empathetic." On the occasion of the publication of her novel, Horrocks revealed some details about her writing and publication process.

While most fiction writers have to wait until their novel's completion to seek publication, after Horrocks handed her agent a partial of *The Vexations*, he came back to her and told her that it could be sold. When Horrocks began writing *The Vexations*, she had never written a novel before. She began to write it in the summer of 2010 when she was taking a summer writing workshop. Upon her plane's landing, when she checked her email, she discovered that she was expected to bring twelve copies of an

unpublished story to be workshopped by the group. She had twenty-four hours to write something. "I wrote a not very good story," she said, "and the response from the workshop was like, 'this is not a great story, it needs to be a novel.'" Her hastily assembled piece eventually became the published work on shelves today.

"You have to sit with the project and hope it will pan out."

When beginning to write, Horrocks had to figure out a lot about research and the role that she wanted it to play in the project. This made the writing process slow and laborious. *The Vexations* is historical fiction. She was interested in the life of the French composer Erik Satie after having been inspired by a piano piece that she was given as a child. She wanted to learn more of his work—he lurked in the back of her mind until she was an adult, at which time

she began to explore who he was. While the novel ended up having multiple points of view, she included Erik because she was fascinated with his music. She discovered endless material for the other points of view; he had two siblings that lead lives further removed from the music scene, but as she learned more about them, she grew to believe their individual stories were compelling.

Early on in her writing process, Horrocks took a trip to France, where she aimed to soak in the atmosphere and visual imagery. A lot of research about French daily life was involved. "There were wonderful historical discoveries that I got to weave in that were really fun," she says. She took to the streets, walking old neighborhoods, researching what people wore, reading contemporary pieces, and finding travel narratives of people alive at the time.

After finishing *the Vexations*, Horrocks realized that novel writers in particular should get comfortable with uncertainty. "I think something that was challenging for me coming from short stories," she said, "[is that] we often lie to ourselves that we do not need external validation." Short stories that are being published have a constant trickle of words of encouragement from the outside world. One of the most challenging things about writing a novel, Horrocks said, is working on the same project without anyone telling you if it is working or not. "You have to sit with the project and hope it will pan out," she said. As all writers know, the short answer is be patient.

The Vexations is not a traditional biopic. It is about art, it is about family, and it is about friendship. Horrocks hopes there is something in the novel for everyone.

Professor Carlise: Shaping the World of Writing

Jessica Sroczynski

“Teaching was the most direct way I could live the life I have wanted to. I get to talk about poems and stories and the meaning they create,” Visiting Professor Chuck Carlise explained. Carlise is the author of the chapbooks, *A Broken Escalator Still Isn't the Stairs* (winner of the Concrete Wolf Poetry Series 2011) and *Casual Insomniac* (Bateau, winner of the Boom Chapbook Prize 2011) and is also the author of the poetry collection, *In One Version of the Story* (New Issues Press 2016). His poems and essays can be found in a number of journals and anthologies, including *Best New Poets* in both 2012 and 2014. He has studied at Wittenberg University, the University of California at Davis, and the University of Houston. In 2012, Carlise completed his PhD in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Houston. Now, he is here at GVSU.



Visiting Professor Chuck Carlise (photo: Zsuzsanna Palmer)

“My role is to create a world in which students are more interested in [writing] than they were before.”

Carlise always wanted to be a writer. At the age of 16, he found an Emerson poem that inspired him and that same year he discovered Poetry Slam. After those moments, Carlise said, “That is what I want to do.” To him, writing is a lifestyle. He loves the community of the writing lifestyle and he loves discussing poems and stories and the meaning they create. It is important to him to identify problems and to explore why they matter. A logical step, then, was to become a professor and carry his love of writing into the classroom with him.

Carlise’s classes can be considered “writing heavy.” “Writing a lot is one of the secrets to writing well,” Carlise believes. He wants his students to step out of his classroom with a stack of work. This approach helps students develop their individual voices in writing. It also forces students to become familiar with writing, something they might never have done before. “My role is to create a world in which students are more interested in [writing] than they were before,” Carlise said of being a professor.

Carlise then shared some literal and theoretical advice for writers. His literal advice is to read. “The thing that young writers miss is that it really matters that you are reading,” he said. His theoretical advice is that writing is a lifestyle. “Anyone can become a writer, but it needs to

become a part of your life. It should not feel like a vacation from your life, it should be integrated into what your life already is.”

Lastly, Carlise discussed his own writing with a unique analogy about sand in an oyster. When sand gets stuck in an oyster, the oyster will coat the sand. Over time, these coats transform the sand into a pearl. What started as a negative (the sand) eventually grows into something positive (the pearl). Carlise compared this to the ideas behind his writing: he identifies a problem then explores why it matters and how it can be shaped into something positive, just like a pearl. “This is the kind of thing that will take me years to develop,” Carlise said of his own writing, “and I am okay with that.”

New Faculty Profile: Danielle DeVasto

Ryan Moore

When walking into LOH 348, the sound of Pandora’s “Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch” radio plays softly, perfectly matching the scenery of the room. It is an unfinished office, simply put. There are still boxes to be opened, posters to be hung, but new faculty member Assistant Professor Danielle DeVasto’s quirky and relaxing ambiance would make you think she has been at GVSU for years.

While she is not liking the harsh weather so far, she has been enjoying the kindness of the community. One thing she has noticed about Lakers is that they all tend to hold the door—for anyone, anywhere. She has not found a favorite spot on campus just yet, but she is adamant on finding one before the end of the 2019–2020 school year. For now, though, her office will do. Her alma mater is the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Working with the array of students there made DeVasto’s experience at GVSU all the more favorable.

DeVasto’s passion for writing came early. As a child, she took interest in writing fictional stories—an entire series in fact—called *Rodger the Mouse*. She combined her passion for writing with her desire to teach to eventually end up in the Writing department. “Writing is so interesting,” she says. “It is part of so many people’s lives in so many different ways.” When she is not deep into writing, some of her hobbies include rock-climbing and gardening. Recently, however, she has been dedicating most of her time to taking care of her two young children.

As for publications, DeVasto has most recently been published in a journal called *Present-Tense*, in which she and a colleague wrote about healthcare communication and how to visualize the signs of health risks.

DeVasto’s recent work involves science writing. She has been devoted to both writing and science for a long time. Combining these two disciplines, DeVasto believes, creates the perfect genre for her. Science writing in itself takes topics of science and turns them into pieces that can be used to inform the public. One of her upcoming science writing projects is taking place here at Grand Valley. She has collaborated with some other faculty members to start up a research project on environmental contaminants in the area. Specifically, the project will be looking at PFAS, chemicals accumulating in the soil, rivers, drinking water, and the human body. The contaminant is found in many things, such as food packaging, dental floss, nonstick cooking, and many other household items. Recently, it has been spreading into the water. DeVasto’s work will deal with communicating the dangers of PFAS to the public and how the contaminant can be cut down.

DeVasto also had some tips on writer’s block, something all writers face. Her number one suggestion? Take twenty-five minutes at a time to stop whatever you are doing and simply write. Nothing else: no phones, no other work, no type of distractions. “You take a little five-minute break... then you start up the twenty-five minutes again”. She also emphasized that if you can focus for just twenty-five minutes, “you can get a *lot* done.”

When asked if she had any advice for writing majors and minors here at Grand Valley, her answer was very simple, yet awe-inspiring. “If you can write...the door is open.” She urges writing students to take advantage of all the opportunities that GVSU has to offer, writing specific or not. There are many opportunities—such



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Writing is so interesting. It is part of so many people’s lives in so many different ways.
”

*Assistant Professor Danielle DeVasto
(photo: Ryan Moore)*

as studying abroad or learning a new skill—that DeVasto believes can help students become a more creative, versatile person and writer.

Pro-wrestling, Home Ownership, and Cheeto Dust

Annie Cunningham



Brian Oliu and Tasha Coryell (photo: Jennalyn Stull)

Most students who attended the Writers Series event on the cold evening of September 16, 2019, were not expecting to hear expressive readings about pro-wrestling, marathons, home ownership, hot dogs, and lingering Cheeto dust. Associate Professor Amorak Huey introduced Brian Oliu and Tasha Coryell, two English instructors at the University of Alabama. Huey shared that he was “drawn to the heart” of Oliu’s pieces and how their narrative presence served as a window to the “empathetic, breathing, feeling human being” behind these stories. Some people read essays to feel the writer at the end of it, and Oliu’s authorship has a vibrant handle on sharing the depth of the self through words on a page.

Oliu’s work has appeared in eight different anthologies, and he has published five books and two chapbooks. Oliu stepped forward and thanked the audience for being there on that Monday evening, saying “You could have been anywhere in the world...” with a smile. After explaining that he would be reading from three pieces from three of his projects, Oliu

explained a little of his process. This is an author who works on at least three projects at any given time, which can be either very productive or riddled with procrastination.

His first reading, “My Mother Still Asks About the Undertaker,” (a reference to the famed Undertaker wrestler) combined themes of death and childhood innocence. Some of the wonderful moments from this piece included, “death loves a joke more than a blanched skull,” the stillness of a child pretending to be asleep, the similarly youthful belief that “saying something enough times will bring it back,” and the melancholy wonderings of “where will I go when I die” and “who will bring me back.”

Huey then returned to introduce Coryell, of which he emphasized the deep veins of humanity and passion that come alive through her imagery. Coryell has over thirty published works across fiction, nonfiction, poetry, prose poems, and more. She is currently working on two novels. She began her reading with a comment that gripped all the undergrads in the room: the scariest thing in the world

is *millennial home ownership*. Coryell’s first piece began with a memory of an internet image gone viral: a lavish house in Australia. She had been searching online for houses for a while, and eventually came across an image with a circle of chairs occupied by witches and scarecrows. When paired with the nervous energy of making big life purchases, the image evolved into night terrors for Coryell. Though she said, “I have not experienced a real monster yet,” the fear of the witches and scarecrows was very real. While exploring the angles of adulthood and childhood fears, she surmised, “visual evidence has never been enough to convince anyone of anything.”

Coryell then read “Love Like Cheeto Residue that Never Came Off the Fingers,” a sensual work exploring carnal appetites through the consumption of junk food. Her reading was immersive and vivid, with many bold and graphic scenes throughout. It was clear, from the atmosphere in the room, that many do not experience this kind of sharp reality on a chilly Monday night. Her electric and uniquely memorable reading marked the end of another eventful visit from two brilliant authors.

fishladder

**Deadline for
submissions:**

December 14

SOUTH

Continued from page 1

saw from both the for profit and the nonprofit websites. From there, I started a Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook account for the Africa Makes Foundation. I used the online program Canva to create some initial social media posts to help people understand the nonprofit's mission.

Along with that, I created a mini social media plan that outlined the audience overview (who the social media posts are geared towards) and the objective for the posts. The founders also requested specific color schemes to be used, along with specific logos to be attached to the posts. I included this information in the plan as well, so that it was all together in one place.

In addition to social media, I wrote three fictional scenarios on health, education, and entrepreneurship that helped to bring further awareness to what 3D printing is and how it could positively impact communities.

Everyone's internship responsibilities differed depending on what the organization's needs. Some interns created websites, wrote and applied for grants, wrote manuals and annual reports, and a wide array of other tasks. We all became better writers through this experience and became more informed about professional writing within a cultural context.

On the weekends we had excursions around South Africa. Our first excursion was up to Table Mountain, a mountain range that can be seen throughout Cape Town. When we reached the top of Table Mountain, the views were absolutely breathtaking. We walked around this mountain range for hours and most of us not even close to reaching the end of the range. I preferred to stand and look out and admire the beauty that South Africa had to offer.

I walked to the different areas of the mountain, to see what special view it had. Look closely and you could see dassies (small mammals native to Africa and the Middle East) in the creases of the mountain. The other excursions we took included touring Robben Island—where Nelson Mandela and thousands of others were imprisoned—a community tour to the different townships in South Africa, a food jam event that included making traditional South African food dishes, visiting Cape Point Peninsula, an African safari ride, and much more!

The reason I was able to go on this study abroad internship experience is because I received the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. I highly recommend visiting the Office of Fellowships, the Financial Aid Office, and the Padnos International Center Study Abroad Office. There are advisors that will help you find scholarships you can apply to, along with other funding options.

If you would like experience with professional writing in a nonprofit setting while experiencing the beauty and culture that South Africa has to offer, then consider Writing in Action:

South Africa as a way to spend your upcoming Summer 2020 semester!

AWARDS

Continued from page 2

exceptional. It speaks to the passion and dedication of Best and Mulally, but also to the strength of the Writing Department.

“Though the position is titled ‘Marketing and Design,’” DesArmo stated, “many of my best interns have come from the writing program. Chelsea’s skillset and success in the position is a clear example of how she has benefited from the curriculum. Her skills from the writing program as well as her ability to ponder, listen, think creatively, and see the big picture will take her far, and I am thankful she has allowed our team to be part of her journey.”

Internships are a required part of every writing student's journey at Grand Valley. For students unsure of what they want to do with theirs, Professor Mulally's office is open.

Rachel Kornoelje at Table Mountain (photo: Rachel Kornoelje)



August Winters & Crime Fiction

Corrina Picano

As the days grow colder in Allendale, the more people spend their free time indoors. On the night of November 7, 2019, this very thing happened. Students and faculty members gathered in the Multipurpose room at Mary Idema Pew Library to listen to crime writer and published poet, Stephen Mack Jones, talk about his first adult fiction book, *August Snow*, and read from the newly published sequel, *Lives Laid Away*.

Introduced by Associate Professor Amorak Huey, Jones walked up beside the podium with his hands in his pockets, warming up the audience with a few jokes. He discussed his fascination and respect for libraries and the people who make them work. Jones recalled how this stemmed from his father who first took him to a library in Lansing when he was five years old. Because of that experience, he grew a love for reading and writing.

*“Let the information follow you.
Do not follow the information.”*

Jones then transitioned to how the protagonist of his book, *August Snow*, came to be and the important aspects of the story that bring more color and dimension to the book. Jones explained to the audience: “The story is about the heroes who make heroes.” A bit perplexed by the meaning behind that, he elaborated, saying that *August Snow*’s parents raised him to become the heroic detective that readers grow to love.

In the book, *August Snow* is a Black Mexican-American living in Detroit, and as Jones explains, the relationship between Black and Mexican-Americans in most populated areas are strained. Having *August* be a mix of two minority races brings more diversity to crime fiction.

Turning towards the sequel, Jones gave the audience a bit of insight into the inspiration behind its plot. At the time of drafting the novel, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids were popular in the news. This sparked anger and motivation in Jones, and he turned to his writing to express that. Within the story, *Snow* continues his journey in Detroit after seeing a connection between the ICE raids in Mexicantown and the Hispanic women that turn up dead weeks later. After reading a well described scene with beautiful imagery from *Lives Laid Away*, Jones asked the input of the audience. One student asked him to read another chapter. Chuckling to himself, Jones read another scene, giving more insight into what the sequel has to offer.

The pure dedication and passion that Jones displayed throughout the night shows how much this book series and the city of Detroit mean to him. He emphasized for writers who want to move to places like New York or Los Angeles to pursue a career: do not. There is inspiration and opportunity right here in Michigan. So for aspiring writers, Jones advised, “Let the information follow you. Do not follow the information.”

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Fall 2019

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