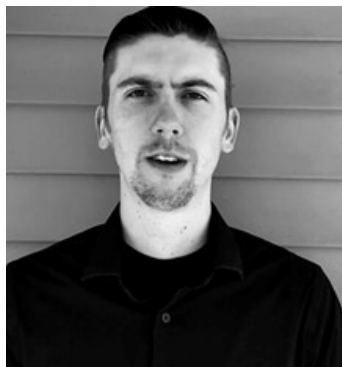


INWRITING

Grand Valley Writing Department | Winter 2022 | Vol. 16.1

IN THIS ISSUE

Faculty Reading	1
Kenny Porter	2
Professor Mund	3
Nonfiction Event	4
Usability Lab	5
SRS	6
Remote Writers	7
Fiction Event	8
Intro Writing Classes	9
Professor Bell	10
Writing Clubs	11
PFAS Update	12



Associate Professor Oindrila Mukherjee, Visiting Professor Chuck Carlise, and Visiting Professor Brandon Rushton (photo: Oindrila Mukherjee, Chuck Carlise, and Brandon Rushton)

Review of Writer Series Faculty Reading: A Poetic Exploration of Community

Brooke Shannon

For many, it has become harder to find a true community. As the pandemic created limitations to social interaction, activities became less accessible. These themes of community and gathering, or the lack thereof, were explored in GVSU's Writers Series on Friday, January 28th. GVSU faculty authors Associate Professor Oindrila Mukherjee, Visiting Professor Chuck Carlise, and Visiting Professor Brandon Rushton performed a live reading of their work to a virtual audience, inviting listeners into their intimate depictions of the tension between the isolative and collective nature of community.

Each author was introduced by one of their students, past or present, and had about 50 minutes to read their respective works. Occurring in six rounds, each author shared one writing piece: first, Rushton; second, Mukherjee; third, Carlise. This

alternating strategy alone is reflective of the human need for community. It illustrates the organic intermingling of stories that end up contributing to a larger conversation. This approach introduces the notion that language and experience come in different forms, but all are necessary.

The first round of readings opens with Rushton's "Little Whackos." He said, "Probably the kids cut their palms and make / a pact. The science experiment looks less / like their own and more like the stranger's / lawn they left it on." Rushton's description of behaviors immediately returns readers to their inner child. As he expressed during Q&A, it was key he chose poems that reflected how he "had worked through the idea of community." This narration of the past urges readers to ask themselves the following: What are a person's earliest

SEE [FACULTY READING](#) ON PAGE 12

CONTRIBUTORS

Brooke Shannon
Alora Bowers
Layla Kren
Kailey Parkins
Lilly Crossley
Colin Blassingame
Sydney Trepeck
Bethany Simmerlein
Torianna Marasco
Paige Bodine
Greg Carlson

Following Your Creative Instincts with GVSU Alum Kenny Porter

Alora Bowers



Kenny Porter (photo: Kenny Porter)

GVSU Alumni Kenny Porter was surprised when he found out that he would get the rare, sought-after creative freedom that many writers seek while writing a new comic for DC Comics, *The Flash: The Fastest Man Alive*. “It’s a three-issue mini-series, a movie tie-in between the *Justice League* movie and the new *Flash* movie that is coming out.” DC was looking for some fresh, unique stories to tell with their new version of Barry Allen, and asked for his take. “They let me just go loose and I got to come up with a lot of fun ideas of one-off adventures and stuff that he would go through trying to live up to the name he’s been building up.” The series will run from April to July, with the first issue coming out this year.

Creative freedom is something that many writers at GVSU seek when looking for jobs. I spoke with Kenny Porter to discuss his advice for those interested in finding that freedom, specifically in the comic

book writing industry. When asked about his experience at GVSU, Porter discussed a specific class that stuck with him throughout the years. “I was a writing major, and I focused a lot on fiction. So I think the fiction workshops, especially my class with Caitlin Horrocks, were really helpful,” Porter said. The writing workshops encourage writers to pursue their own style of storytelling. Porter’s style includes very visual descriptions and snappy dialogue, which lends itself well to scriptwriting for comics. The workshops are the perfect opportunity to get feedback from others who have a lot of experience, and gain confidence in new skills.

Porter emphasized the importance of reaching out to others and finding opportunities within the industry as soon as possible. “While I was in college, I was already trying to make it as a comic book writer,” Porter began. “There is a company called Top Cow. They did a lot of books that I read in the 90s, and I won a contest where they were looking for new writers while I was in school.” Porter was able to write his first published comic with an established company and editor which helped him fine-tune his style. He also started working in marketing right after school. Porter said that insight into the business side of the industry taught him how to explain complex concepts to people. This helped him learn how to put together better story pitches for publishers and how to market things he created on his own.

Creating his own books was another thing that helped Porter move from being a writing major at GVSU to working with companies like DC Comics. “With comics, you kind of have to prove you can

do it in order to make it. It’s kind of like pro-skateboarding, where you go out on the street and build a reputation. With comics, you do that by writing, drawing, producing, and self-publishing.” Porter acknowledged that self-publishing is not always promoted in other forms of writing and is even looked down upon in some cases. However, he said that “unlike a lot of other avenues, self-publishing is very encouraged in comics because it shows you can make something out of nothing.” Right out of college, Porter did just that by creating a book with artist Renny Castellani through Kickstarter called *Barnstormers*. Their Kickstarter eventually got picked up by the major publisher Simon & Schuster, which demonstrates that self-publishing does not limit opportunities for future publications. “From there, I got an agent and did a book with Scholastic called *Fearless*.”

The first step to writing a comic? Porter says to just write. “A really good way to do that is to write shorts at first, like 5-10 page stories, and get those created by pairing up with an artist. Maybe eventually collect them into a book, something with a spine that people can take notice of and you can take to conventions or send to editors.” Porter also suggested learning about how the collaborative process of writing comics works and recommended a book called *Make Comics Like the Pros* by Greg Pak and Fred Van Lente. Porter said that the more he wrote and put out finished books, whether that be on his own or through a publisher, the more he got to know other people in the industry. He was then presented with more opportunities where he could prove that he could make something out of

SEE KENNY PORTER ON PAGE 8

New Faculty Profile: Derrick Mund

Layla Kren

Adjunct Professor Derrick Mund always envisioned writing and poetry having a place in his life. Mund grew up on a farm outside of Rothbury, MI. He began his postsecondary education at Western Michigan University with a dual major in English and comparative religion. He later made the decision to transfer to GVSU to major in writing and then went on to complete his MFA at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Mund worked as a poetry editor for SpringGun Press, co-hosted a reading series called *The Leon Affair* with Sommer Browning and Elisa Gabbert, and put on storytellers series and other literary events. He appreciated these projects because they allowed him to “connect with other writers and be able to provide a space for them to connect their work with others.” Mund values human connection and participating in dialogue when it comes to his work as a poet.

Poetry is Mund’s genre of choice. Mund feels that writing poetry embraces the “trepidation” about what extends beyond “our exterior and logical sense of reality.” This idea of negative capability is represented in his book of poems that he collaborated on with Michael Flatt. *Chlorosis*, published by The Operating System, is as Mund puts it, “an ecopoetic breakup poem sorta with the earth. But you know, funny.” Mund and Flatt wrote *Chlorosis* in a collaborative Google Doc in which they never limited the rules of “cutting, editing, and rewriting each other’s work.”

Collaborative writing requires Mund to immerse himself in a separate mental space from the one in which he writes alone. He enjoys the aspect of the “inherent dilution of the ego in

the text” from writing in this format. Writing *Chlorosis* collaboratively took his appreciation of human connection in writing further and allowed for a new level of meaning to be created within the work.

“Write anything, don’t think about its purpose.”

When Mund found himself back to his roots in Michigan, he began teaching at GVSU because he wanted to return to the academic perspective of writing and literature. Having been both a student and professor in GVSU’s Writing Department, Mund says, “I like GVSU. It’s a great campus with a department dedicated to writing, and I value being a part of that.” Mund teaches WRT 219:

Introduction to Creative Writing and COM 215: Story Making. When it comes to his teaching, Mund approaches it as a “text exploration mixed with writing exercises and workshops.” His aforementioned belief in negative capability, accepting uncertainty without needing reasoning, is a mindset he brings into the classroom. Mund also exposes his students to the work of other writers that exemplify the concepts important to the “exploration of writing and literature.” Mund himself pulls inspiration from both the important and trivial things in the world around him. This transcends into his teaching as he encourages students to look at their writing journey in a different light and gives the advice: “write anything, don’t think about its purpose.”



“
Mund approaches [teaching] as a text exploration mixed with writing exercises and workshops.”

”

Adjunct Professor Derrick Mund (photo: Derrick Mund)

Exploring the Limits of Nonfiction

Kailey Parkins



“...I want to portray images that show you something you might not be able to see from available vantage points.”

Sarah Einstein (photo: Sarah Einstein)

Bodyguards decked out in explosives and heavy weaponry surround her as she slowly walks through a desolate, nuclear wasteland, peering up at the mountains that tower above them. As they continue walking, they look down into rivers that once flowed with clean water and now hold only oil and debris. Though she is in an unfamiliar world, she acts as the narrator, describing a particular story that is true to the story she wanted to tell, instead of the obvious one before her.

That narrator is Sarah Einstein, a nonfiction author, and that desolate, nuclear wasteland is the landscape of the co-op video game *Fallout 76*. Einstein expressed how she wanted to write a true event in a fictional setting, a decision that allowed for a deep and thought-provoking discussion. “Nonfiction is like a camera,” she said, “and I want to portray images that show you something you might not be able to see from available vantage points.”

After opening the Grand Valley Writers Series event on March 1, 2022, she continued with two other works of nonfiction: a collection of essays gathered from young male students over fifteen years of teaching and a memoir about the friendship she had with a homeless man. As she read the former, Einstein expressed her love for

collages which led to the decision to use them in nonfiction, talking about how she enjoys making the reader think deeper about the writing and its meaning. Einstein never reveals names and avoids pseudonyms, only describing the hardships that these young men have expressed to her. This allows the reader to focus on their situations, and reflect upon the fact that everyone goes through hard times in their lives.

“There is something that everyone can take away from the Writers Series, writer or not.”

Her third and final piece of nonfiction she shared was *Mot: A Memoir*. This story depicts her friendship with a man named Mot, who is homeless and struggling with mental illness. Einstein expressed the importance and personal attachment she has with this project was unique in the way that she would often write chapters as soon as she had finished talking with him. “If I know someone so intimately that I can project his voice, I want to tell his story in the way I believe he would have phrased it because I know how he acts and responds,” Einstein said.

After she read, she began a discussion regarding the ethics of writing about someone else’s life and sharing it with the world. She expressed the importance of putting yourself in someone else’s shoes when writing about another person’s life, and what it would mean if they were to write their own biography. Would they be comfortable sharing these events and experiences with the world? What effects does it have on their life? These are all important conversations to be had between you and the person you are writing about, she asserted.

After this important discussion, Einstein ended the Writers Series event enthusiastically and welcomed questions from the audience. One student asked about identity within a person’s writing, and Einstein gave this advice, “We are all complex beings, don’t wipe away your identity, there is nothing normative about anyone.”

There is something that everyone can take away from the Writers Series, writer or not. Your experiences matter and they are a part of who you are and who you grow to be.

2022 AWP INTRO AWARDS

NONFICTION

Winner:

Sarah Spencer

“Shed Some
Light, Spark Some
Flames”

The Traveling Usability Lab: Mobile Research Kits

Lilly Crossley



*Assistant Professor Kylie Jacobsen
(photo: Kylie Jacobsen)*

Assistant Professors Danielle DeVasto and Kylie Jacobsen have collaborated to create a traveling usability lab (TUL), which helps students learn about usability testing to create user-centered documents and designs. The pair introduced the TUL kits to classrooms in fall 2021 after securing a Teaching Innovation Grant from GVSU earlier in the year.

Usability testing is a research method for creating and shaping products that fit the needs of their users. This method involves observing people as they use a website, document, or product and recording any difficulties they have during the process to evaluate design decisions and improve the users' experience.

The TUL kits allow usability testing to occur outside of a traditional research lab in places such as in the field or in classrooms. The TUL kits can be used for research in any class that involves professional writing, web writing, and document design. DeVasto explained, "We see it having a teaching purpose, helping students learn more about usability testing while also doing actual testing, whether that's for research or class projects."

After applying for the Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center (Pew FTLC) Teaching Innovation Grant in March 2021 and getting accepted near the end of Winter semester 2021, DeVasto and Jacobsen were able to use the funds to start getting the materials needed for the TUL. They had everything by the beginning of Fall semester 2021, and were able to start slowly introducing the lab into classrooms. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on face-to-face interactions, it was a slower process in getting these labs into the classrooms since usability testing is so collaborative and often conducted in person.

The TUL consists of two different types of toolkits. The paper prototyping kits include a storage clipboard with supplies such as graph paper, pencils, colored pencils, rulers, and scissors. These kits help in the early stages of developing user-centered documents, like creating low-fidelity paper mock-ups of designs or completing user-testing methods on paper.

The other, more robust, TUL kits each contain an eye tracker, laptop, document camera, and voice recorders inside a compact backpack to help test things such as, but not limited to, newly developed websites and mobile apps.

Currently, there are 10 paper prototyping kits which have been introduced into classes such as WRT 200: Introduction to Professional Writing and WRT 253: Document Production and Design, and 2 TUL kits which have been in classes like WRT 451: Advanced Writing for the Web.

These kits are helpful because, "we did some research and we discovered that Humanities Departments, like the Writing Department, often don't

have the space or money to support research labs. You often see that in more STEM-oriented fields," Jacobsen said.

The mobility of the TUL takes away the problem of needing a permanent space because it does not require any to conduct research. It also acts in different ways than a traditional usability lab. "Students are able to take this to where their users are rather than trying to get someone to come to campus or work with whoever is closest at hand. We can actually work with a wider range of users and scenarios and that, in turn, can help our community. It becomes a local learning experience and something that gives back to our community," DeVasto said.

One reason the grant was accepted for this project is because of the way it enhances teaching and learning. As Jacobsen described, "the lab helps students test out their writing to make sure their documents are user-centered, provides students with a research method, and exposes students to industry-standard technologies." Classes have been giving feedback on the lab after using it. These reflection statements will be used in the final report sent near the end of Winter semester 2022.

The final report acts as a follow up of how the lab has been doing so far and the impact it has created on the students, teachers, and community.

When asked about her biggest goals for this lab, Jacobsen answered, "I would love to see more students who are particularly interested in pursuing careers in professional writing or related fields use this kit to support their research goals, and be able to create a portfolio of some kind," and, "I would love to see more

SEE USABILITY LAB ON PAGE 7

Sharing Your Work: Student Reading Series

Colin Blassingame



Student Reading Series Meeting (photo: Colin Blassingame)

For any student writer, getting feedback for a written piece outside of class can be challenging. An important part of the writing process is to have a stress-free environment to share work and to experience another writer's work. The Student Reading Series (SRS) is a monthly event organized by students that gives students the opportunity to read their work and get positive, constructive feedback from peers. The SRS is not exclusive to writing majors/minors; it is open to all GVSU students who want to read any works of fiction, poetry, nonfiction, or drama that they wish.

I had the chance to attend two SRS events this semester in the Niemeyer's Honors Reading Room; a cozy area of campus that could be described as a lounge with large comfortable armchairs, a couch and even an electric fireplace to keep the room extra toasty in the midst of winter. Before the readings started, we set up the chairs in a circle to relax for a bit and introduce ourselves near the warmth of the fireplace.

The student coordinators, Andrea Mantke and Chiara Nicholas, who

organize the events, were there to support the student readers and share some of their own work. After each piece was read the room took a moment to reflect on it and engage in open conversation. I read some of my own fiction and poetry to the small group of students during the events and enjoyed the appreciation of the listeners and the encouragement of their feedback.

After reading a few poems at my first meeting, I was surprised to hear that my pieces had common themes. This was not something I had thought about before choosing to read those poems. They were all created at different times and had different subject matters, but during our conversation it was pointed out that love and the darker theme of loss was common throughout them. I had not focused on those themes but still, they were there. This was an insight that helped me relate more fully to my work, to understand what was coming out to the reader and what was not. I found that reading a work in progress aloud can be an important tool that can help a writer focus on minute

details in their work to figure out what is effective and what might need more fine tuning. Reading at the SRS also proved to be rewarding. It was fun to hear what lines of my poetry stuck out to the group.

I also enjoyed hearing about other students' writing and what projects they were working on. Assistant Professor Jerry Stinnett, a writing professor at GVSU, also attended as interim SRS facility advisor for Assistant Professor Dani Devasto, who normally oversees the event. Stinnett, who gives honest and constructive insight on any text, was a great part of the experience. He made sure to bring up connections each piece had with other writers and curious ideas from the past that could relate to the discussion. Along with input from fellow students, Stinnett relayed some of his own expertise to the group during the sessions. Each reader was met with positive and formative feedback that I personally found very helpful in understanding my own work and the work of others.

The SRS met a final time this semester in a showcase event for seniors. This was a great opportunity for the students who are set to graduate this year to read their own work to peers in a cozy and no-pressure environment before they leave GVSU. The SRS will continue into the next school year, so there will be plenty of events in the future to participate in and enjoy.

"An important part of the writing process is to have a stress-free environment to share work..."

The Writing Experience After GVSU

Sydney Trepeck



GVSU Writing Alumna Elaina Smith
(photo: Elaina Smith)

After graduating from GVSU, friends and family love to ask “What will you do after graduation?” While some writing majors have a clear answer, others are still not sure as to what they want to do with their newly minted degree(s).

As it is to be expected, the experience varies quite a bit depending on the nature of the job as well as the graduate’s hobbies and interests. Plus, what a student wants to do after graduating may change depending on their life experiences. On top of that, some may even double major or add on a minor to their writing degree. Below are two of the many GVSU alumni working through these factors to take their writing degrees to the next level.

To start off our deep dive into where our GVSU writing alumni are now, I talked to Kristina Pepelko. Pepelko graduated in 2012 and has been working ever since. After graduating from GVSU, she went on to receive her masters in nonprofit management and leadership from GVSU in 2019. She has also taken on a variety of different writing jobs in the field of business as well as communications.

Today, Kristina is the founder and one of the writers for The

Typewritery, which specializes in creative writing styles like poetry and connecting writers to the world beyond the typical business writing lens. The experience that Kristina has had beyond GVSU is one that not only is exciting, but unique because of the ties to communications and business.

Elaina Smith, the second alumna I interviewed, has also been busy since graduating from GVSU in 2021. Since leaving, she has taken on the responsibility of being the social media coordinator for Central Michigan University.

During her time at GVSU, she was involved in two of the writing organizations that GVSU offers: *fishladder* (a student journal of art and writing) as well as *InWriting* (the student-produced biannual newsletter for the Writing Department). The majority of the coursework that Smith took part in at GVSU focused on a variety of aspects of writing, much of which ranged from business writing, creative writing, and working with other writers as a consultant in the Writing Center.

Overall, both of these experiences dive into not only what a career in writing looks like after finishing a writing degree at GVSU, but what types of possibilities are ahead. I learned that a writing major or minor is extremely versatile and there are a number of jobs that are now incorporating writing into daily workplace tasks.

As graduation nears for several writing students, I reflect on the experiences offered at GVSU, which I hope will inspire upcoming writers to follow their passions and pursue the career that will hopefully give them the “right” answer when a person asks for the umpteenth time what they will do after graduating.

USABILITY LAB

Continued from page 5

UX (User Experience) centered courses adapted into our curriculum.”

Answering the same question, DeVasto said, “I think my two biggest goals for this are to help students in the Writing Department think about writing in a new way, to kind of broaden the possibilities that they think of when they think of writing and designing, and to help build more partnerships and take students into the community more. I would really love to see this be used not only for students’ own education but also for projects that would make our communities more usable”.

DeVasto and Jacobsen plan to have the TUL fully functioning by Fall semester 2022. They are working on a website that allows students to be able to check out the kits when they need to. They also hope to create some introductory training sessions or classes for other faculty and students interested in using the toolkits in the future.



The TUL Kits (photo: Kylie Jacobsen)

“Make the odd normal, and the normal odd”

Bethany Simmerlein



Tommy Dean (photo: Tommy Dean)

As the GVSU Writers Series came to a close this semester, we met Tommy Dean. Dean is a fiction writer, specializing in flash writing. Starting as a volunteer at literary magazines, he became the editor of two magazines, *Fractured Lit* and *Uncharted Magazine*. He is also the author of three flash fiction chapbooks: *Special Like the People on TV*, *Covenants*, and *Hollows*. Dean has made quite a name for himself in the world of writing and held a craft talk and fiction reading at GVSU to give some insight on his style.

At the fiction reading, we were welcomed with a poster printed with an excerpt from a story in Dean's flash fiction chapbook *Hollows* called “An Approximation of Melody.” It read, “I held the wooden body close, pretended to know what love was, so I could break my own heart, until it beat like the powdery wings of a moth convinced by the safety of life.”

Dean is fascinated with flash writing. He says it is the perfect way to tell a compelling short story. Flash writing is short fiction written in a timely manner. Flash fiction stories, being 1000 words or less, require a good amount of creativity. The craft talk showed us how to get that good amount of creativity flowing.

The craft talk opened with a

presentation titled “Invite, beg, snare, broadcast, brag: How to open short stories/essays, flash fiction and poetry.” Dean explained the purpose of starting a story and how to keep it going. The audience was introduced to many tips and tricks for strengthening writing styles that can be used by anyone who is inspired by the beauty of writing. Dean told the group “let your characters tell you the story.”

To begin, he gave a few different prompts to work on and told the room to keep writing until “you clear out the doubt and learn your own style.” After writing for 3-7 minutes, he gave the audience the opportunity to share. The creativity in the room inspired imagination and inventiveness. The prompts were designed for making a mundane task into something odd. Dean called this exercise Negative Space Opening, which is defined as the exercise of explaining everything a character did not do to build a plot.

“Keep writing to discover what’s there.”

Dean wrapped the craft talk with a harder prompt called “Passing the Word Baton.” Using style choices, such as repetition and italicizing, the group created a storyline that followed strangers sharing the same experience. A writer in the room shared the prompt of two strangers grabbing the same item at a grocery store.

At the fiction reading later that evening, Dean read more from *Hollows*. After reading the stories he picked, Dean explained the inspirations behind the narrative. To give the audience a true insight into his writer's mind, Dean said “flash has a

way of moving quickly but digging deep into depth” and to “keep writing to discover what’s there.” Dean taught us that discovering creativity is easier than one might think and pushing yourself to continue writing will open your mind to new possibilities.

KENNY PORTER

Continued from page 2

nothing until he got to where he is now working on comics like *The Flash*. “Trust your creative instincts and what interests you,” Porter concluded, addressing all aspiring authors. “Write the stories that you want to read and make sure you finish them. Things do have to be perfect after the first draft.”

Porter's inspiring path shows that following your interests can not only help you achieve your goals, but also present opportunities that you might never have thought about before. Now, go finish that draft you have been working on!

**2022 AWP
INTRO AWARD
WINNER**

FICTION

**Frankie Spring
“When the Pipes
Stopped Singing”**

Stretching for Success: Introducing WRT 120, WRT 130

Torianna Marasco

If given the opportunity, would you choose to split a course over two semesters to better understand the content? In search of better assisting students, the Writing Department spent over two years preparing new courses into the first-year writing foundations offerings: WRT 120/130: Strategies in Writing (Stretch I and II).

WRT 120 focuses on research strategies and drafting to help students gain confidence in their writing and researching skills. With the completion of this course, they can then move onto WRT 130. In this course, students learn to build well-supported arguments and incorporate sources. The two-course sequence was created to aid students seeking more time and additional writing support than what is offered in the faster-paced WRT 150—Strategies in Writing.

Previously, students could self-place into WRT 098, before taking WRT 150, to prepare them for the General Education requirement course as well as courses in other subjects. However, the university started eliminating 0-level courses because they ultimately did not contribute towards GPA or the total 120-credits necessary to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Those paying for this option raised concerns about compensating for the college course that essentially was not helping students gain college credits.

Writing Department Unit Head, Professor Christopher Toth, explained that the addition of WRT 120/130 was not made as a replacement for WRT 098. "GVSU administrators decided that 0-level courses across the university would be eliminated. The timing was merely coincidental," Toth said.

The planning of WRT 120/130 began in Fall 2018, and the courses launched in Fall 2020. Director of First-Year Writing, Associate Professor Amy Ferdinandt Stolley, was a driving force behind the new courses. Toth said that "she oversaw the whole curriculum planning process from initial inception to its launch."

If the two 3-credit WRT 120/130 stretch courses seem more suitable and less stressful, students may choose this path. Alternatively, they can choose the original WRT requirement, WRT 150, if they feel confident that they can handle the faster paced course. The one semester, 4-credit course condenses the material learned in the stretch courses. Both WRT 130 and WRT 150 conclude with students submitting a writing portfolio for evaluation, and the two courses have the same learning objectives. Regardless of which route is taken, students must earn a C or higher to satisfy the university's General Education Foundations Writing requirement.

The results of the two-course stretch sequence are still uncertain and potentially will not be fully known for at least another 2-3 years. Toth indicated that in Fall of 2021, there was a higher demand for the stretch sequence courses, which caused the Writing Department to add additional sections to the schedule. This demand is possibly from incoming undergraduates feeling unprepared out of high school (because of the pandemic) and searching to acquire more writing practice. Thankfully, this is exactly what these courses were designed for.

Toth expressed, "even though we can't see clear results, the professors teaching these courses [who gather 3-4 times each semester] have spoken highly about the stretch courses," he said. Indirectly, Toth has also heard positive feedback from students. On behalf of the Writing Department, Toth spoke confidently about the new curriculum and its assistance in educating students who desire more time, practice, and support to complete the first-year writing requirement.



Attributes of two-course stretch sequence in place of WRT 150 (design: Torianna Marasco)

New Faculty Profile: Nancy Bell

Paige Bodine



Adjunct Professor Nancy Bell (photo: Nancy Bell)

Within the Writing Department, the professors and adjuncts create an outstanding experience for both writing majors and minors. Adjunct Professor Nancy Bell started teaching writing at GVSU this year. She is a perfect example of how every professor in the Writing Department adds a unique perspective to the courses. Although this is Bell's second semester at GVSU, she is a seasoned professor and has taught writing classes at Davenport in the past.

Nearly every student starts out by taking WRT 150: The Strategies of Writing, which is the class that Bell teaches. WRT 150 provides students with a foundations of writing and research, which is a crucial experience for students' success in later college writing. This class can seem intimidating to students because it is a push to get them to an advanced college writing level. With this knowledge in mind, Bell works strenuously to make the classroom a safe space for students and tirelessly reaches out to students to help them understand the concepts taught in the class. "I love working with college students. Seeing

that point where everything clicks is so rewarding," Bell said, reflecting on what it is like to teach higher education.

Throughout her writing career, Bell recognized that writing is an art. It is tricky to get an idea onto paper, but Bell has a passion for helping students get through writer's block and utilize tools to get words onto paper. She is motivated to help students gain outstanding writing skills.

"WRT 150 is an intense class; it is four credit hours," Bell said. "By the end of the class, students create a portfolio. This is a way for students to represent their writing in three different ways. Then, students turn in a portfolio at the end of the semester."

According to Bell, this portfolio is one of the unique features of GVSU's Writing Department. The portfolio is the main project for the class; crafted with three different pieces written throughout the semester, it is an incredible opportunity to build writing samples in a professional way.

"She is a perfect example of how every professor in the Writing Department adds a unique perspective to the courses."

Reflecting on the impact of producing these portfolios, Bell said that these portfolios are a way for the professors to evaluate writing skills over the three essays, rather than from a single writing sample. The essays are also a way for the students to practice and demonstrate research skills.

Bell's interest in teaching at GVSU was sparked by her husband and his positive experience teaching as a professor for the Theater Department at GVSU. Additionally, she was

also interested in inspiring the next generation in their writing journey.

"Do not be afraid to try new things," Bell said on the topic of students about to enter the writing world. She adds, "You never know what is around the corner; sometimes, you have to try something you are unsure about. See if it works out and if it doesn't, try something new."

"Do not be afraid to try new things," Bell said."

Embarking in a career after graduation can seem scary and intimidating. Still, Bell believes that with passion and a go-get-em attitude that students will be able to be successful in the writing world. Bell is an outstanding example of how the writing professors at GVSU are motivated to ensure that their students are ready and prepared to write well in the future.

In her free time, she loves to read and spend time with her four kids. She also enjoys traveling around Michigan and seeing every inch of this beautiful state.

**Want to write for
InWriting?**

**Join us at the first
information meeting
of the 2022-23
school year this
September.**

The Excitement and Relief of Shared Creative Spaces

Greg Carlson

IN THE MARGINS

There are so many joys that the pandemic has snatched away from us; among them a plethora of opportunities for meaningful human interaction. Two years in and counting, I am confident we could all use a bit more community engagement when possible. So you can imagine how excited I am to share that The Writers' Club is back! Now, with In The Margins, we have two unique writing clubs on campus, not to mention numerous student-run publications.

I was lucky enough to attend the re-inaugural meeting of The Writers' Club last semester. I did not know what to expect going in, but by the end, I was already excited for the next one. The main goal of this group is to provide a space for all kinds of writers to come together and share in any capacity they choose. Some students might bristle at the idea of structured meetings, so this club offers a space where members decide what is on the agenda each week as they go. This is a great way to encourage our passions to bloom, and allows the conversation to unfold organically. All this might sound intimidating for students who are not always comfortable speaking up, but that is the wonderful thing about The Writers' Club; you are free

to simply observe. Share when you are ready, give feedback when you feel compelled, and know that you will face no judgment or pressure from other members in the meantime.

On that note, In The Margins is another fantastic space for students to share and grow without fear of judgment or specific expectations. This club for poetry and creative writing highlights and celebrates LGBTQIA+ students and allies, providing a safe space for free expression.

The meeting activities do not generally focus on such topics, but this reassurance and encouragement alone holds value for us all that is difficult to overstate. The format of these meetings is a bit more regular, but that certainly does not mean less fun. Generally, members are given a prompt and time to write, then the rest of the time is open for sharing and discussion. This format provides a great opportunity for any writer to exercise their creativity. But even more importantly, it helps students stay engaged with the sheer joy of writing for fun. In the midst of stressful schedules and often overwhelming responsibilities, such an opportunity is incredibly important.

Both of these clubs facilitate creativity and networking while keeping our passions for writing alive. And since writers of any skill level or genre are welcome, there is endless potential for mutual growth and exchange. What invigorating and inspiring thoughts. After all, experiences like these are what college is all about! So, fellow students, take a moment to find these clubs on LakerLink. Reach out. Set aside just an hour or two for yourselves each week to embrace that community connection, and make some time for fun. Perhaps the loveliest thing about each of these groups is that they have no requirements to join.

2022 AWP INTRO AWARD WINNERS

POETRY

Al Gastmeier
"Vacancy in the
Conch Shell"

Katie Heil
"The Banked
Streets"

Frankie Spring
"Only One
Sagittarius"

"Living with PFAS" Update

Alora Bowers

As developed in *InWriting's* Fall 2021 newsletter, Assistant Professor Danielle DeVasto's project titled "Living with PFAS" is now being hosted by GVSU Libraries in their Digital Collection.

However, the work on this project is far from over, "For as long as people want to tell their stories, I plan to listen and continue adding to the archive. The story of PFAS is still unfolding, and I hope that the archive can continue to grow and reflect that. I really hope to hear more stories from younger folks!" DeVasto said.

Her research is planned to culminate as an interactive, multimedia map that combines stories and scientific data. DeVasto aims to help people understand PFAS by presenting her work as an educational resource that will build relationships between communities, support education, and aid in future decision-making regarding PFAS. You can learn more about "Living with PFAS" and find the link to the project at <https://www.pfasstories.org/>

FACULTY READERS

Continued from page 1

associations with friendship?

While community is fundamental to human existence, it can offer moments of alienation. In Mukherjee's reading of "Greeting," readers are ushered into "the lonely," facing a deep, present reality: "Everyone was on their laptops, their faces hidden by the screens... their voices reminded me that some people are not alone and that they do in fact talk and even listen. This was encouraging, even if it does not happen to me." Even in a group setting, the narrator feels an interconnected disconnect as they occupy communal space alone. As Mukherjee shared with listeners, there is a deliberate transition from Rushton's conversation about gathering to her mention of isolation, giving readers an illustration of our navigation of all things pandemic-related. While we all had a devastating experience in common, we maneuvered it alone.

"What Follows" relies on the tension between what was and what is. Written and read by Carlise, he closes with the following: "The distant

commotion of a car's engine blocks away... I know I've passed through it a thousand times and never looked back for an aisle behind ... I'm going outside to see." As the distance furthers, the narrator yearns for it. This is representative of the desire we all have to return to what was; to return to our initial perspectives of relationships and all they entailed. While Carlise's piece validates this desire, his narrator challenges us to think forward. Are readers being pushed to open themselves up to newly-defined versions of community? Or will their pursuit for community lie in the familiar?

While access to social engagement continually shifts, it is important to recognize where it remains. GVSU's Writers Series creates a communal environment for both professors and students where common passions are shared. It demonstrates the beauty and permanency of what literary expression fosters: a relationship between language and human connectivity.

INWRITING

Winter 2022

EDITOR

Anna Evangelista

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Torianna Marasco

REVIEWERS & COPYEDITORS

Sydney Trepeck

Audrey Kelly

Ashlyn Miller

Anna Evangelista

Torianna Marasco

Michaela Triemstra

Brooke Shannon

FACULTY ADVISOR

Kylie Jacobsen

PRINTER

SmartPress

Create. Shape.
Design. Share.