

InWriting

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Ander Monson during Visiting Writers event
(Photo: Kathryn Davis)

Visiting Writers: Faculty Alumni Return

Kathryn Davis

On Monday, October 16, the Writing Department was graced with the return of two of its most lauded and loved former faculty writers—Ander Monson and Sean Lovelace. The pair spent the bright autumn afternoon speaking with a number of student writers in a small roundtable craft talk before moving on to a reading, which drew droves of students, faculty, and public alike, filling the room until it brimmed with listeners.

Monson and Lovelace’s visit left students with much to consider in terms of style, intention, and the importance of what we do as writers. It left the audience chilled in the wake of the pair’s literary

mastery, and still with contemplation of the fleeting and unsettling lines of prose that stirred the entire room.

“In all my years as a faculty member,” Monson joked at the start of the afternoon, “nobody ever asked me to read from my own work. It’s about time.” He laughed good-naturedly with Lovelace as the pair settled into an easy banter that soon prompted a discussion of style, craft, and the process of both; those who listened did so with rapt attention.

Lovelace and Monson write poetry,

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Annual Poetry Night Offers Celebration, A Moment to Breathe

Maria McKee

Thursday, October 27 was a chilly evening, but at 7 PM students, faculty, and community members gathered in the L.V. Eberhard Center to celebrate one of GVSU's greatest treasures. Poetry Night, a part of the 15th annual Fall Arts Celebration, is a highly regarded gathering that invites members of the local community to hear accomplished poets read their work. The power of poetry came alive that evening as audience members waited in anticipation for the event to begin. This year, Dan Gerber and Jane Hirshfield headlined the event, providing an evening of contemplative beauty and freshly curious images of the everyday world.

“At any moment my pen may run out of ink. My heart may run out of blood.”

Dan Gerber, who just released his seventh book of poetry, was the first to read and immediately settled the audience in the atmosphere of homecoming and reflection. He mentioned that he was born in Grand Rapids, just a few miles away from the Eberhard Center, and later read a series of poems inspired by his childhood memories at a family cottage on Lake Michigan. Gerber seemed to open minds and memories for all as his poems rocked the audience back and forth from themes like childhood to existential questions.

“What is it that urges me on?” Gerber said he asks himself while writing. Much of his poetry, he explained, questions life and considers the fragility of humanness. “At any moment my pen may run out of ink,” Gerber read, “My heart may run out of blood.”

As his reading continued, Gerber shifted toward poems that depicted small areas of nature that allowed everyone to forget the room full of

people and the howling wind outside. He closed his reading with a poem about bugs. “If I got to know bugs better, they might not be as creepy,” his poem began. As he considered fleas, spiders, and ticks, Gerber’s poem filled the room with laughter and solidified the sense of community Poetry Night creates.

Jane Hirshfield followed Gerber with a series of equally thought-provoking pieces. “You never know where a poem will end up,” she said, explaining that her first poem of the night was the oldest of her poems she’s maintained a relationship with. “For What Binds Us” appears in her second of eight poetry collections, *Of Gravity and Angels*, which was published in 1988. As she recited the words from memory, Hirshfield again reminded audience members of what brought them all together. “There are names for what binds us...” it begins.

Hirshfield mentioned that she writes poems as a way to “navigate difficulty” and to “attempt to be permeable of what comes.” To explain this feeling, she read her poem “Tree”, where she considers a redwood growing next to a house. “Even in this / one lifetime, / you will have to choose. / That great

calm being, / this clutter of soup pots and books.” After this, she closed her reading with a series of short poems (her admitted favorite poems to write) that engaged the senses and confronted delicate truths. “Little soul,” her poem “Harness” begins, “you and I will become / the memory / of a memory of a memory.”

Following the reading, a reception and book signing were held where attendees had the opportunity to speak with the poets. The warm, excited chatter of poetry admirers filled the room as Gerber and Hirshfield’s words hung in the air, offering time for communal reflection.

Year after year, Poetry Night offers the community a time to be attentive to and focused on the incredible words and insight of celebrated poets; but more than that, this year seemed to offer the opportunity to step away from the unrelenting business of life and exhale. While the quiet voices of familiar poets lulled everyone to the shores of Lake Michigan, down an empty country road, to a backyard tree, they were reminded of why Poetry Night is such a highly regarded tradition of the GVSU and the greater writing communities.



Dan Gerber at Poetry Night
(photo: Maria McKee)

New Faculty Profile: Lindsay Jeffers

Emily Zerrenner

Do you know anyone who has had a serious curling accident? Visiting Professor Lindsay Jeffers may be one of those people. “In 2005, I broke my leg in three places while curling in Canada,” she says. “It was actually my first year teaching high school.” Nevertheless, Lindsay came back to finish out the school year on crutches — showcasing her dedication to her students — a trait that continues to inform her teaching style at GVSU.

Establishing a connection with students is key for Jeffers. “It’s really important to learn names right away. I feel like I can connect more with students if I know who everybody is,” she says. By the second week, she likes to have students’ names down in order to build a connection with them.

Writing itself is a vulnerable thing, and Jeffers recognizes that. “My primary goal, before everything else, is to make sure that they can feel comfortable talking and sharing things with me,” she explains.

Another key component to Jeffers’



Visiting Professor Lindsay Jeffers
(photo: Rachel Kishman)

teaching style is instilling confidence in students about their own writing. “I think that’s part of the goal of taking a writing class in college — to not only teach them about academic writing, but to give them the confidence that their writing is good enough to apply it to the kinds of professions and careers they’re interested in.” Jeffers enjoys being able to point out a student’s hard work, whether that be a well-crafted description in a personal narrative or integrated research in an analytical paper.

She is not a stranger to West Michigan; Jeffers is originally from Jenison, and commutes to GVSU from Kalamazoo to teach. “It’s interesting that I’ve come full circle,” she says. Jeffers has a Bachelor of Arts in English and Spanish, a Master of Arts in English, and a PhD in English Education, all from Western Michigan University (WMU).

See JEFFERS on page 10

New Faculty Profile: Gale Thompson

Celia Harmelink

Joining the Writing Department this year is Visiting Professor Gale Thompson, someone who has traveled all over the U.S. for her education and career. Over the years, she has taught in Massachusetts, Georgia, and now Michigan. She received her PhD in English with a creative dissertation from the University of Georgia and her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. At GVSU, she currently teaches classes in Creative Writing and Strategies in Writing.

Additionally, Thompson is an accomplished writer and poet. *Soldier On* was her first book of poetry, published in 2015 by Tupelo Press. She has also published two chapbooks: *Expeditions to the Polar Seas* and *If You’re a Bear, I’m a Bear*. She has two more manuscripts in submission, and her

poetry is featured in many online and print journals. She also runs her own poetry magazine, *Jellyfish Magazine*, which she started in 2009.

While Thompson originally believed she was heading for a career in the medical field, she quickly realized that writing was her true calling. She says she loves writing because it grants her the opportunity to learn about topics related to what she is passionate about. “I thought I was going to be a doctor or a veterinarian. I loved space, I loved math, I loved art. I loved everything and I couldn’t decide what I wanted to be. I just felt like whatever decision I made, I would be cutting myself off. Writing was the one thing I wanted to do that would be able to keep all those things in balance.”

See THOMPSON on page 10



Visiting Professor Gale Thompson
(photo: Todd Kaneko)

New Faculty Profile: Bryan Lutz

Tiha Kabir

One of the things Visiting Professor Bryan Lutz loves best about teaching is finding a way to empower students to do something they wanted to do anyway. “Writing instruction, particularly things like argument, or for me, teaching Business and Professional communication, is about how education can accomplish your own goals, your own actions, and facilitate cooperation between humans.”

This year, Lutz is teaching WRT 200 and 350. Students can expect to see a professor who not only values activism and advocacy, but also strives to help millennials address stereotypes in the workplace.

While he was an undergraduate at Ohio State University (OSU), Lutz learned the importance of concepts such as directive questioning, critical engagement, and encouraging students to think through their ideas and arguments. “I loved having that conversation, facili-



Visiting Professor Bryan Lutz
(photo: Todd Kaneko)

tating [that conversation], and helping students translate that into writing,” Lutz says.

His graduate career also examined activism and advocacy. Lutz earned his Masters in Rhetoric and Composition at OSU and his PhD at Iowa State University. His Master’s thesis centered around the Arab Spring and how people in Egypt and Tunisia were able to use “communication technologies to build an identity, solve problems, and advocate for the world that they wished to see.” His dissertation explored millennial stereotypes. He looked at how they were having trouble in professional contexts and how to effectively argue against these rhetorical constructs. In his research, Lutz developed a powerful lens to view culture through. “I really started to think hard

See LUTZ on page 11

You’re Never Just a Writer

Joslyn Mara

Distinction in Writing offers a way for students to use the fundamentals they gain in their academic pursuits and morph them into real experiences that not only build their portfolios and resumes, but enrich them as human beings. Students can choose to pursue experiences for the program, or they may find that their experiences fulfill what is required. Either way, students are the driving force behind their own success.

With their chosen advisor, students start the process by turning in an informal intent statement to the Writing Department office. After that, they complete a program of activities and experiences that are showcased in a final portfolio. The final portfolio that students hand in is more than a summary of their activities; it’s a culmination of their journeys and development into fully-fledged writers.

Two recent alumni of the GVSU Writing Department, Annabelle Miller and Teresa Williams, both completed a variety of experiences and accomplish-

ments that were molded to fit within four of the five components needed for the Distinction in Writing program. These components allow students to develop skills for professional, creative, community-driven, cross-cultural, and inter-disciplinary writing, but what these look like for each student can differ drastically.

“Students are the driving force behind their own success.”

Annabelle Miller used Distinction in Writing to expand her confidence as a writer and editor. Working on the *GVSU Journal of History* and *fishladder*, Annabelle discovered her interest and aptitude in editorial work. Publishing and editorial jobs are now open to

her during her post-graduate career. Distinction in Writing made her a better person, she says, because of the many conferences, volunteer opportunities, and other experiences she would’ve passed on without it.

Distinction in Writing also let her combine two majors: Writing and English. Two years later, applying to English doctoral programs, she says that this cross-discipline component shaped her understanding that “you’re never just a writer.”

Teresa Williams tackled their Distinction in Writing journey a little later in their academic career, but they already had a plethora of experiences under their belt. Before Distinction in Writing, Teresa had been involved as a co-director of the GVSU Student Readers Series and a presenter at regional conferences about integrating multi-modality and language diversity into the Fred Meijer Center for Writing

See PROGRAM page 11

Digital Studies: Defining the Field as it's Happening

Annie Livingston

While the overwhelming majority of the university population is engaged in social media and an ever-growing digital landscape, there have been no GVSU programs dedicated to studying what it all means. Until now. As of Fall 2017, the university is offering a Digital Studies (DS) minor that aims to serve students from all disciplines and enables them to study the world they inhabit as learners, even the aspects that are less tangible.

“This minor works for everybody because you can shape it. You can pick and choose what part of the digital culture you want to focus on.”

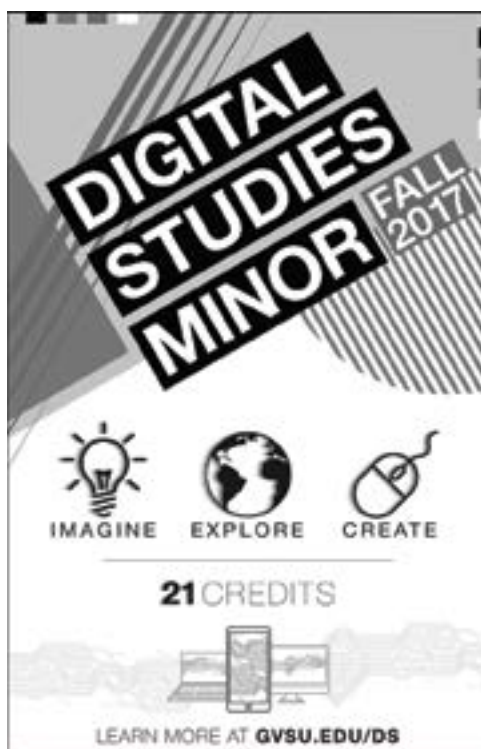
Defined as “the exploration and analysis of how data and contemporary technologies are used,” the minor is vast in scope and potential. Writing students are accustomed to this vastness, making them natural candidates for the minor and its courses. However, this program is tied to the Writing department in more than just its sweeping breadth: the minor is directed by Associate Writing Professor Laurence José.

Director of the DS program, José is enthusiastic about what the program can do for students, especially those already engaged in the Writing Department. “It’s student centered,” says José. The minor features two student-focused goals: to teach students the digital skills they need to succeed and enable them to “critically assess tools and cultures.” José is excited to say that there is a course model available for every GV student.

The program is characterized by its modular curriculum, its flexibility, and

a resolute endeavor to combine theory and practice. “Students are introduced to digital studies with two core courses,” José says, “after that, they get to choose from a wide range of courses to make the minor work for their own goals and interests.” After completing the two core courses: Digital Identities and Communities, and Digital Data and Design, students need to take two courses from each of the modules, “Digital Tools and Production” and “Digital Culture.” Then, students come together for the required capstone. In this way, the minor is similar to GVSU’s Writing major. José is quick to express how these applications are varied: “This minor works for everybody because you can shape it. You can pick and choose what part of the digital culture you want to focus on and what part of the digital tools or production you want to focus on.” The entire DS program is built for a wide variety of students.

One such student is Advertising/



Digital Studies Poster
(Poster design by Andrew Juodavlkis)

Public Relations major and Writing minor Noelle Hobbs. Hobbs shared that the DS minor is making her last two years at GVSU all the more valuable. Uncertain of what credits to enroll in, the DS minor was both a perfect fit and perfectly applicable. As she looks to graduating and entering this “digital world,” Hobbs thinks the program will be valuable in all aspects of her life. She’s looking forward to taking DS 350: Social Media and Culture. Hobbs is excited to take a more discerning eye to an element of modern life that is so prevalent.

“Those kinds of questions about our identities, who owns our data, are important and timely [questions].”

The DS minor encourages students to be more critical thinkers and writers, but in ways that also expand creativity. It takes ingenuity to apply creative lenses to social media, but it is this sort of writing that will make a difference in our world.

Professor José herself continues to be excited by the field. She shares that it may feel “overwhelming at times” since “as scholars we like to put up borders around disciplines, but here the borders keep shifting.” José mused, “we’re defining the field as it’s happening,” and shared an anecdote from class wherein a discussion about Facebook and technology led to questions like “Who owns our identities?”

José reflects that “those kinds of questions about our identities, who owns our data, are important and timely [questions]. Just look at the news and the current conversations.” The DS minor is a place for students to tackle ambitious questions, so they are prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Inside the Word Poetry: GVSU's CUPSI Team

Ashley Benedict

In slam poetry, writers express personal stories or struggles in an intense and emotional style in a competition setting. The College Unions Poetry Slam Invitational (CUPSI) is a nationwide competition that allows university students the opportunity to learn how to perform their poems effectively and watch other fellow poets in action.

The birth of the GVSU CUPSI team, Tendons and Teeth, began late last fall. However, the root of the idea began with a single student, Rachel Jenkin, when she visited a friend at Eastern Michigan University to listen to a poetry reading a few years prior. Serendipitously, Jenkin met Writing alum, Kelsey Frasier, at an open mic night last fall—the formation of the team after that was fast-paced and exhilarating. Open mics were held and other students were encouraged to attend and judge the performers. About half way through the Winter semester, all of the points were added up and the Top 5 scoring poets were placed on the team.

“You should take comfort in the fact that we have a whole community of students who would love to hear what you have to say more than anything else.”

The team ended up consisting of current students Annie Livingston, Cayla Dwyer, Rachel Jenkin, and now alums, Nahson Cook and Elaina Earl. Two of these members, Livingston and Jenkin, have decided to continue the team, and just renewed their membership as a student organization in the hopes of receiving funding for this

year's competition in Philadelphia.

Livingston credits her involvement to the team to the Writing Department. “I couldn't have been involved or successful without the writing program here. Classes like intermediate and advanced poetry workshop, and intermediate nonfiction, all put me in places that allowed me to think about the overlaps in the personal and political in my writing. I know that these workshops and these professors [helped me grow] as a writer and as a poet. I also think that the other competing poets with experience in writing classes and workshops, like Cayla Dwyer, were able to translate craft skills cultivated in classes into their slam poetry.”

While Livingston recognizes the Writing Department's contribution to her growth as a writer, she also explains the ways in which being on the team has helped her flourish as well: “As a writing student, so often we just share our work in class and leave it there. That can feel both really good and very unsatisfying. There can

be a lack of personal connection or collective authenticity. But going to a slam and competing to make a group, to put a bunch of people together, really made all the difference.”

“The environment was one of fierce love and explosive language. It felt like being inside of the word ‘poetry.’”

Last year, the team participated at the national competition in Chicago, and while they didn't place nationally, the members have nothing but positive anecdotes about their experiences, and refer to last year's team as a way to grow as writers both individually and as a community. “The CUPSI competition was beautiful and strange. The environment was one of fierce love and explosive language. It felt like being inside of the word

See SLAM page 11



*The team who competed in Chicago, from left to right: Cayla Dwyer, Rachel Jenkin, E Earl, Annie Livingston, and Nahson Cook
(photo: Rachel Jenkin)*

OPW: Helping Students Reach Their Potentials

Aaron Robert

The Organization for Professional Writers (OPW) offers students a chance to explore the world of writing beyond the classroom. The organization, led by junior Emily Zerrenner, seeks to meet the needs of writing students by hosting unique events, workshops, networking occasions, and providing members with connections and writing opportunities.

When the Writing Department changed the track system in the curriculum, the boundary between creative and professional writing eroded, and students did not seek the help of extracurriculars to fill that void. OPW, aware of these changes, is now meeting the needs of students who are entering the workforce.

“The Writers’ Club, Student Reading Series, and *fishladder* all focus on the creative. OPW focuses on helping students with the transition from school to the working world and giving them the resources they need in order to do so,” says Zerrenner.

“That’s why I love OPW - it’s connected.”

OPW has hosted an InDesign workshop where students were exposed to professional software that writers often use in the industry. OPW is also the official sponsor of Internship Night, which is an informational session where writing majors and minors learn about potential internships and hear from students with internship experience. As Zerrenner explains, “It’s a great opportunity for students, as all majors are required to complete a three credit internship, and this equips them with the tools to find what they might be looking for.”

Associate Professor Laurence José, the faculty advisor of OPW, says that the organization helps students answer



Organization for Professional Writers during a meeting

(photo: Aaron Robert)

critical questions such as: “What does it mean to be a writer? What does writing look like in the workplace?” José also says that OPW compliments the internship program, as students apply classroom instruction to a real-world context. José mentions that students can create more writing opportunities for themselves by designing documents, flyers, and sharing content online. José appreciates this aspect, based on her own personal experience, “My undergraduate work in France was in the classroom and separated from reality. That’s why I love OPW—it’s connected.”

To ensure this connectedness, OPW meets with the Writing Department Advisory Board, which consists of writing professionals who advise classroom curriculum. Meeting with the Advisory Board grounds the organization in reality and provides students with beneficial feedback on current writing practices.

OPW allows students to pool together connections for possible internship and job opportunities and proves beneficial for those interested in the Distinction in Writing—which is a graduation specification granted to writing majors excelling outside of

the classroom. Members can gain extracurricular writing experience by writing for OPW’s social media platforms and blog.

For Zerrenner, who plans to attend graduate school, OPW has helped her achieve her professional goals, “I’m leading a community of professional students. I’ll be able to show what we’ve accomplished, in terms of our social media and the blog posts I’ve written. [The] path I choose after graduation requires me to have leadership skills, so having the opportunity to lead this organization is invaluable. It also is rewarding because I know I’m helping fellow students reach their potentials.”

“OPW focuses on helping students with the transition from school to the working world.”

Bear River Writers' Conference

Rachel McLaughlin

For 10 years, Walloon Lake in Northern Michigan has been home to the *Bear River Writers' Conference*: welcoming adult writers of all ages to swing through the doors of their cabins at the University of Michigan's alumni campground for writing, workshoping (with peer and faculty feedback), readings, and outdoor camp activities. Writing lakeside under the midsummer sun, Gracey Mussina, winner of the GVSU scholarship to the conference, was able to create new works of nonfiction to workshop and read with fellow writers from multiple genres when she attended last June.

Though applying for the scholarship was competitive, the email from the Writing Department faculty announcing Bear River peaked Mussina's interest, as the focus seemed to be placed on environmental writing.

Under the guidance of a faculty of published writers and professors, attendees workshoped new pieces they had written over the four days of the conference. After seeing Donovan Hohn speak at GVSU, Mussina was eager to be a part of his creative nonfiction workshop group, "I recognized previous visiting writers at GVSU

such as Jamaal May, Tarfia Faizullah, and Donovan Hohn were attending the conference, and felt their work had helped me grow as a writer. I wished to stretch the craft of writing further," said Mussina.

Mussina originally wanted to write a piece combining culture and the human body, but scrapped the idea when it didn't go where she had intended. Instead, she added to her Garbage Collection with essays and poems about trash including a narrative on dumpster diving; a memory of salvaging damaged goods with her mother; and giving more meaning to the things society considers trash. "It's so easy to get caught up in our everyday lives," said Mussina. "This conference gave writers time to write new pieces in a beautiful place. Nestled in my hammock with a journal and looking out at the lake, I felt at home—really connected to my roots."

Many writers present, Mussina noticed, varied from all ages—from young adults to established writers who had published multiple works: "Being the youngest in Donovan Hohn's workshop group was intimidating at first, but I found so much inspiration

to learn of other writers' journeys," said Mussina. She was intrigued by the skill levels amongst each genre and age group, and learned to find balance between her characters and narration in her essays with their help.

"Everyone is supportive of each other's ideas and of one another."

Making deep connections with such diverse and unique individuals at the Bear Rivers Writers' Conference was on Mussina's mind as she got to know her fellow cabinmates and writers for four days not only through writing, readings, and workshops, but through outdoor activities such as boating and nature hikes. Mussina describes that atmosphere as tribelike, "I didn't know anyone there, but instantly felt at home—everyone is supportive of each other's ideas and of one another." Mussina recalled mentioning her search for a Petoskey stone and discovered her cabinmate had left her one as a parting gift.

After panel discussions and faculty readings, the writers learned more about their peers through participant readings on the last night of the conference, "It was nerve-wracking, but incredible to celebrate our works with everyone's support," said Mussina. "It helped us learn where we all came from and where we will go."

Interested GVSU students should write a statement of interest for the scholarship and talk with their writing advisors about the opportunity. "It's a chance for students to get to work with writers [Bear Rivers' faculty] they may not get to work with otherwise," said Associate Professor Caitlin Horrocks. Writers interested in attending the Bear River 2018 conference from May 31– June 4 should watch for an email from the Writing Department containing details about how to apply for the conference.



Gracey Mussina with other Writers at the Bear River Writers' Conference

(photo: Gracey Mussina)

Graduate School Night: The Journey Beyond Undergraduate Education

Gracey Mussina

As commencement rolls around the corner for some writing students, we find ourselves wondering where our journeys will take us beyond the undergraduate level of education. On this endless quest for creativity, it may bring some of us into the professional field; for others, it may inspire the pursuit of a higher education to further hone our skills in rhetorical, professional, and creative writing. Beyond offerings of cupcakes and cider, the Writing Department provides a valuable guide for students called Graduate School Night to make these elusive thoughts more tangible.

On October 2, Associate Professor Laurence José, along with Assistant Professors Todd Kaneko, Zsuzsanna Palmer, and Beth Peterson hosted Graduate School Night in Lake Ontario Hall. The team of professors offered their unique perspectives from their areas of expertise, encouraging students to engage in the discussion about application materials and program options in creative writing, professional writing, and rhetoric and

composition.

The presentation started with a powerpoint screen illuminating the curious faces of writers in the room

“In pursuit of graduate programs, research is key.”

and the overarching question: Why attend graduate school?

Kaneko offered one unique perspective on what higher levels of education can provide students: to think of graduate school as a bartending job or mixology course. The Writing Department’s faculty and module curriculum provide the ingredients, tools, and techniques for writing students to concoct well-crafted work in both creative and professional writing. Graduate school offers an opportunity for students to gain new insight on the theory of writing, enhance writing craftsmanship, and build profes-

sional identities.

José, Kaneko, Palmer, and Peterson gave students a glimpse at the different graduate school potentials, including what M.A., M.F.A., and Ph.D. degrees can offer prospective students. In pursuit of graduate programs, research is key. Students exploring graduate programs should consider the funding opportunities that are available such as obtaining a teacher assistantship, looking into certificates and wide variety of programs, and location.

When researching graduate programs, all professors in attendance agreed that one of the most valuable things a student can do is to consider how the aesthetic of a school matches their own. They all encouraged that students look into what faculty is involved in the program, fields of interest, and what students have graduated from these programs.

“One of the most valuable things a student can do is consider how the aesthetic of a school matches their own.”

***Writing Major Scholarship Applications
due March 1, 2018***

***See the Writing Department Website for details
about availability, eligibility & how to apply***

Students left Graduate School Night with a handout of the residencies and programs prospective schools offer in addition to other key resources to look into. With the devoted support the Writing Department and professors give to writing students, our futures feel more tangible and open to new perspectives beyond GVSU.

RETURN continued from page 1

short stories, flash fiction, and other works of literature that are commonly celebrated for their abstract and stylistically bold nature. It is, in many cases, the iconic experimentation that each writer performs on the page that allows their work to strike audiences so profoundly and in such a wonderfully uncomfortable way.

While Monson and Lovelace both publish work that fosters a darker, eerie sort of tone, the manifestation of this in terms of each writer's personal style is massively different due to their experimental nature. "You have to set limits to your experiments," Monson assured. "If you want to experiment, having constraints is important. They give permission." Lovelace nodded in agreement before assuring, "Things often don't work. So you reevaluate. Revisit."

Each writer encouraged eavesdropping, being an overzealous writer, and considering the importance of creative writing. Lovelace looked to the floor, speaking slowly as he said, "I think creative writing is a way to make some change. I think it's a way of becoming—of helping all of us to become more decent humans." Monson was silent for a moment before lamenting, "We live in a world that doesn't give a shit about art. That in itself—that's what makes what we do so important." At this, the room fell silent.

"I think creative writing is a way to make some change. I think it's a way of becoming - of helping all of us to become more decent humans."

As the afternoon passed and the crowd settled in for the pair's reading, Lovelace took the podium. A hush seized the room as he began to read his first piece, shaking his head and laughing slightly. "Sometimes," he said, "you work for four hours, and all

you can say is, 'This...is not good.'" The audience laughed, set at ease by this familiar struggle. The writer began again, starting into a collection of works ranging from abstract flash fiction to selections from a mock-in-

"You have to set limits to your experiments. If you want to experiment, having constraints is important. They give permission."



Sean Lovelace at Visiting Writers event
(photo: Kathryn Davis)

terview with actor James Franco that left the audience snickering—a collection of new and published works that seemed far from "not good." The audience was left staggering due to the discord set off by Lovelace's humor juxtaposed against eerie prose.

It became clear in the first moments of Monson's reading just how much truth there had been to his earlier words of advice, as well as the ways in which stylistic experimentation liberates his

work. With slow and gravelly purpose, Monson read a slew of melancholy and chilling short pieces from poetry to flash fiction that left the audience quiet with awe, shifting in brilliant discomfort.

While neither Lovelace nor Monson were asked to give a reading during their time as GVSU faculty, Monson was right: it was about time. These writing faculty alumni left current students reeling in the hopes of further honing personal styles and seeking experimentation that will allow each student's writing to become as successful as it is important.

As the afternoon became evening and their reading came to an end, Lovelace and Monson left behind a room filled with anxious silence; an audience left in a haze brought on by strange, masterful style and chilling prose.

THOMPSON continued from page 3

Outside of teaching and writing, Thompson enjoys running, graphic design, and taking care of her Labrador retriever puppy. Some of her favorite poems are "Morning Song" and "Nick and the Candlestick" by Sylvia Plath. She is very proud of her poem featured in the *Denver Quarterly*, titled "The Most Beautiful Bibles," as it was one of her first real publications. She loves GVSU because of how invested the university is in its students, how nice the people are, and how welcome she feels.

As someone who still struggles with writing herself, she offers this piece of advice to students, because at the heart of everything, writers are all faced with the same challenge: filling up a blank sheet with words. She says, "It's going to be difficult and that's the fun of it. You show up every day like, what new discovery am I going to have? Or, what new thing is going to show up? You start at zero every day and it's really hard, but it's also incredibly rewarding."

JEFFERS continued from page 3

Jeffers taught methods courses for future teachers while at WMU, and her dissertation was a case study with mentors for student teachers. She asked the mentors about the qualities they were looking for in teachers, as well as how to better prepare them. “The teachers’ communication skills with [the mentors] were a big part of how their relationship worked out and how successful they were with student teaching,” she explains. This has informed her own teaching style, as she places a lot of importance on communicating with students.

The Writing Department is thrilled to welcome Jeffers, and her dedication and care for her students will benefit classes to come.

LUTZ continued from page 4

about advocacy and activism, and how I can help folks be better advocates and activists through using communication technologies.”

Lutz hopes to integrate these concerns into his classroom by looking at forms of discrimination and how to address and combat them. “How we communicate what needs to happen in the world is what I’m trying to teach and empower students to learn.” By becoming effective communicators, he hopes his students will be able to advocate for a better future.

In addition to three published articles, one on the Arab Spring and two on writing portfolios, Lutz currently has a book chapter under review that examines Donald Trump’s tweets from legal, communication, sociological, and psychological perspectives. He is also working on an article that examines millennial stereotypes, and how their moniker might compromise their success in academic and professional contexts. When it comes to students addressing stereotypes aimed at them, Lutz says, “I want to break some of those things down, offer students some ways to combat against that, and offer teachers a way to teach how to combat that in the classroom, what that conversation is and how they might renegotiate it.”

PROGRAM continued from page 4

and Michigan Authors, just to name a few.

This program gave them the opportunity to add professional and academic value to the personal experiences they had already gained. Even more than that, they say, “I became too wrapped up in the things I was doing, and not reflecting on what those skills meant to me. Distinction in Writing forced me to narrow in and put the work I did in the Writing Department into perspective.”

Both of these grads explored new experiences, developed new skills, and grew as people because they decided to pursue Distinction in Writing. Getting started during sophomore year is recommended, which is what Annabelle did, but Distinction in Writing can be started later, like Teresa, who started it the beginning of their senior year.

Distinction in Writing cultivates an environment for students to pursue their own success, which starts by seeking out writing professors or visiting the Writing Department.

SLAM continued from page 6

“poetry,”” says Livingston.

“Every single person was incredibly unique and just unapologetically themselves, and the environment throughout the duration of the competition encouraged nothing less,” says Jenkin.

The team is having their first slam on Wednesday, December 6 from 7 PM – 9 PM at Area 51 in Kirkhoff. For writers who are interested in getting more involved in the writing community on campus, this is a perfect opportunity to hone one’s writing skills and meet other writers. Jenkin offers some sound advice to those who may be nervous about joining: “You should take comfort in the fact that we have a whole community of students who would love to hear what you have to say more than anything else.”

Writing is all about building a community and forging connections with the world around you – and the GVSU CUPSI team does just that.

Grand Valley Writers Series Winter 2018 Lineup

**Patricia Clark &
Roger Gilles**

Faculty Reading
Wednesday, February 7

Robert Long Foreman

Nonfiction Craft Talk & Reading
Monday, March 12

Maggie Smith

Poetry Craft Talk & Reading
Thursday, April 12

WRT 350: Teaching Students Global Business and Communication Skills

Jessica Harsevoort

Assistant Professor Zsuzsanna Palmer takes her instruction a step further by immersing GVSU students in real-world business applications. Offered both Fall and Winter semester, WRT 350: Business Communication is open to various disciplines such as computer science, writing, and business majors.

For her WRT 350 courses, Palmer always introduces collaborative projects that connect GVSU to other national and/or international universities. While the projects vary between each class, Palmer says her courses allow her students to learn about professional communication practices, to set up good working relationships with a diverse set of people, and to look beyond local concerns.

This semester, Palmer's WRT 350 class is involved in an intercultural, accessible website project. During this specific assignment, GVSU students are gaining insight into global relations while also learning how to make a website ready for a global audience. As the students build websites using free online tools, they also focus on reader-centered writing, design, and accessibility. "Here, we are promoting inclusivity for people with access issues," says Palmer.

"I try to emphasize shared goals and collaboration as opposed to differences."

This collaboration spans the latter half of the semester, starting out when students are divided into teams and partnered with groups at corresponding universities: a graduate course of Disability Studies at the University of Washington (UW) in the U.S. and an undergraduate course of Business English at Pázmány Péter Catholic University (PPCU) in Hungary.

First, the undergraduates from Hungary present business plans for services that fulfill a need in their country, ranging from restaurants to delivery systems. When the international students send their proposals to Palmer's class, the GVSU undergraduates create website designs and content for the proposed start-up companies.

Meanwhile, the graduates from UW act as advisors on how to make the businesses and websites more accessible for individuals with disabilities. They guide GVSU students on crafting accessible websites with elements such as detailed image descriptions for blind persons who use screen-readers.

"There are a lot of different elements that come together, but it makes it interesting for students," says Palmer. "They are not working with hypothetical people. They have [real] people who read what they write and react to it."

The majority of communication is through emails. Since this project features students with assorted English-language abilities, some misunderstandings are bound to happen. "I try to emphasize shared goals and collaboration as opposed to differences," says Palmer. "That's not to say differences don't come out and don't need to be acknowledged, but as we go through the project we take those issues and turn them into teachable moments."

This project will also result in collaborative research. Palmer will work with Sushil Oswal from UW and Rita Kóris from PPCU to evaluate the effectiveness of their collaborative teaching method. They plan to present their results at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in March, and write a report on their findings.

With the collaboration as a whole, Palmer's purpose is to reveal how the business world is so globally connected. "Once students graduate and start working, it is very likely they will work remotely with people of different backgrounds, so if we can prepare our students for that then I think we did our job," says Palmer.

InWriting

Fall 2017

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